STAN LEE SOUNDS OFF

COMICS FEATURE™

BYRNE LEAVES MARVEL

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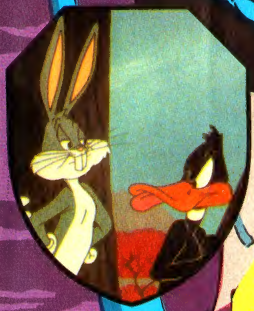
IT'S MILLER TIME!
NEW DIRECTIONS
FOR
DAREDEVIL
AND
BATMAN



WHAT'S UP, DOC?
BUGS BUNNY
WHO ELSE?

MIKE BENTON ON
USING PRICE GUIDES

THE POWER OF
IRON MAN

THE SHADOW KNOWS
A TALK WITH WALTER GIBSON

PLUS

THE END OF THE SILVER AGE
THE NEWEST SUPERHERO GAMES
AND YOUR MONTHLY COMICS GUIDE

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HAPPY HAL'S HOWLINGS

And this time, faithful readers, Happy Hal's really howling! I just came out of a meeting with the company accountants and marketing people and learned some pretty grim news. It seems that while our dramatic price cut from $2.95 all the way down to $1.75 did entice more people to pick up **COMICS FEATURE** for the first time, it just didn't bring in enough. They wanted to raise the price right back up to $2.95. I told them that our loyal readers were all poverty stricken and couldn't afford the increase. I screamed and howled my head off. In no uncertain terms they told me that I had a choice: I could either cancel the magazine (shudder) or raise the price. They read me the riot act and pointed out that we were not a non-profit organization, that our suppliers wanted to be paid, that our writers and production people needed to eat and have a place to live. They then repeated their original demand that either the price be raised to justify the costs involved with creating the world's leading magazine about comic books, animation and comic strips or that the book be cancelled.

They suggested that there were indeed ways that some costs could be cut. We could lower the quality of the writing or we could do away with the typesetting or the quality of the graphic design. I told them that these were the things that **FEATURE** readers have come to expect from the magazine. They repeated their demand.

I told them that **COMICS FEATURE** is an important feature of the American cultural scene, that both **Comics Scene** and **Comics Collector** were no longer being published, leaving us the only mass circulation magazine in the field. They repeated their demand. They also suggested that if I didn't want to follow in the footsteps of these deceased magazines I would take their advice.

At this point, my wits came to my rescue. I suddenly reminded them that not only was I happy Hal, the editor of the magazine, but also the publisher and head of the company. They worked for me, not I for them. I told them that my only bosses were our readers. They quickly pointed out that if I was to properly serve the readers, I would do what was needed for the preservation of the magazine. They asked if the readers would prefer to have a higher price tag on the book or no book at all. I had to admit that survival must come first. Without a magazine there would be no readers. And besides, Happy Hal isn't ready to give up his platform!

I did get a couple of agreements out of them. The price would only be raised to $2.25 and not back to the $2.95 it was before. Overall, this is really a 25 per cent decrease in price—from the old $2.95 down to $2.25—I know it doesn't feel like a decrease, but it is. This still makes us the cheapest magazine about comics published today, and is certainly a bargain when you consider the quality of the columnists and the features.

I also got them to agree that if every reader went out and recruited even one additional reader each issue, giving us twice the circulation, we would drop the price down once more. After some fighting and struggling they gave in. So it's really up to you now. If you want to back me up on this, and Happy Hal really could use your support, then you will go out and convince just one more person to pick up the mag regularly. If not, the price will have to stay at $2.25. It's in your hands . . .

On another subject—Next issue is a very special one. We will be celebrating the 25th birthday of the House of Ideas, Marvel Comics. There will be looks at the company's past and future, and upcoming special effects. Stan, Jim Shooter, Roy Thomas, Jack Kirby and loads of other wonderful people will be there. Don't miss it!

CF

"IRON MAN!"

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COMICS FEATURE

COLUMNS

GOLDEN AGE
Will Murray contributes one of the last interviews with the late Walter B. Gibson, author of *The Shadow* and dozens of Golden Age comics.
6

HEROES
The long and circuitous (not to mention circuited) career of IRON MAN, Marvel's armored Avenger.
10

GAMES
Steve Perrin on the latest bundles from Britain, among them Judge Dredd and Dr. Who games.
16

STRIP TEASE
Coulton Waugh, Dickie Dare artist and author of the definitive history of comic strips, talks to Ron Goulart.
20

STAN LEE SOUNDS OFF
The Man bids a reluctant farewell to his loyal readers, but a farewell brought about by joyous news!
40

SILVER AGE
A new generation takes over as Jacobs & Jones conclude their incisive coverage of the 60s comic explosion.
42

FUN & PROFIT
Mike Benton offers salient tips on the proper usage of comic book price guides.
48

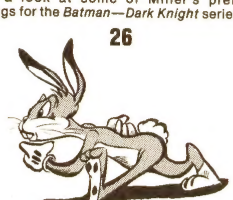
FEATURES

DAREDEVILS AND DARK KNIGHTS

IT'S MILLER TIME!

Frank Miller is once more making waves in comics with his current powerful writing on *Daredevil* and his upcoming *Batman* mini-series. Miller discusses both series in this indepth feature which also includes discussions with *Daredevil*'s editor, Ralph Macchio and the book's artist, David Mazzucchelli. Plus—a look at some of Miller's preliminary drawings for the *Batman—Dark Knight* series!

26



ANIMATED ANTICS

What's up? Why, Bugs Bunny, Doc. Anything else ya' need to know?

51

For Advertising Information Contact:

Jay Eisenberg
JE PUBLISHERS REPRESENTATIVE CO.
6855 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 200
Los Angeles, CA 90038
(213) 467-2266

DEPARTMENTS

HAL'S HOWLINGS
2
NEWS
4
LISTINGS
37
LETTERS
46

STAFF

Hal Schuster
Editor/Publisher

Robert Lewis
Prod. Mgr./Art Director

James Van Hise
Stan Lee
John Peel
Ron Goulart
Contributing Editors

Robert Strauss
Asst. Publisher

Michael Mayo
Jim Keegan
Ruth Kennedy
Alice Matevosian
Joe Murphy
Production Assistants

Jack Schuster
President

Cliff Cairns
Circulation Director
cover characters

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FEATURE NEWS

JOHN BYRNE LEAVES MARVEL

In a move that caught comic fandom completely by surprise, John Byrne has quit Marvel Comics and has gone entirely freelance.

Originally, Marvel had announced that Byrne would script and draw issue 296 of **The Fantastic Four**, the title he has done since issue 232. That was to have been a triple-sized issue (see related story in the next issue of **Comics Feature**.)

Since the final issue of Byrne's **Fantastic Four** will be issue 293, Jerry Ordway has stepped in as the interim artist on the title with Roger Stern as scripter. The anniversary issue will be a 64 page (double-sized) issue which will be drawn by five different artists including Ordway, Ron Frenz and John Romita, Jr. The issue will be plotted by Jim Shooter and scripted by Stan Lee. While the story will still involve the search for The Thing, at press time Marvel could not confirm how much of Byrne's announced plot for the issue would be retained.

Also left up in the air by Byrne's departure is "The Last Galactus Story" (which had been appearing periodically in **Epic Illustrated** until that title was cancelled, and is yet to be completed) and the **Invisible Woman** mini-series which he was to write and Mary Wilshire to draw.

Changes in **The Fantastic Four** under Byrne's tenure included the addition of She-Hulk to the title, a move not welcomed by all fans. While Byrne clearly liked the character of She-Hulk, her prominence in the title will probably not be as pronounced in the wake of Byrne's departure.

There were indications of some behind-the-scenes conflicts when Byrne did not renew his contract with Marvel and became a resident freelancer. The first effect of this occurred when Byrne dropped his very popular revision of **The Hulk** after a handfull of issues while DC simultaneously announced that Byrne would take over **Superman** with the summer '86 issues and completely revamp and streamline that venerable title. DC's announcement of the "new Superman" was even carried by tv network news, including on-screen interviews with Byrne at his studio.

Byrne's sudden departure from **The Fantastic Four** recalls his original proclamation when he took over the title that he intended to surpass Jack Kirby's 102 consecutive issue record as artist on that title. Byrne had already done 61 issues at the time of his departure.

Besides his work at DC, Byrne is planning a project for WaRp Graphics, an adaptation of an old Edmund Hamilton science fiction novel.

AMERICA'S HARDEST WORKING HERO MAKES HIS "EPIC" DEBUT

Are you ready for industrial strength comics?

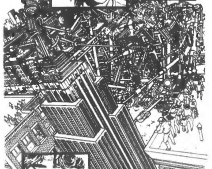
If so, you're ready for **Steelgrip Starkey**, America'a hardest working hero and star of his own six-issue Epic Comics series created by Alan Weiss, scheduled to debut this summer.

"Steelgrip Starkey is a cross between Paul Bunyan and 'The Great Race'," explains Associate Editor Margaret Clark. "It's the story of how an ordinary man handles the awesome responsibility of being a hero."

Patrick "Steelgrip" Starkey is a construction worker who is given "The All-Purpose Power Tool," a device of incredible technology. He is chosen by the tool's inventor, Mr. Pilgrim, and Pilgrim's representative, Shari Barrett.

"Starkey is chosen because he best fits the archtype of the hero Pilgrim is looking for," Clark says. "He's a combination of everyday guy and superhero."

Alan Weiss, whose credits include



issues of **Capt. America** and **The Avengers**, will be joined by James Sherman and Val Mayerik for the series.

Each issue will be written by Weiss, and he will pencil issues 1, 2 and 6. Sherman will ink and color the series, penciling and inking issue 3. Mayerik and Sherman team up as penciler and inker for 4 and 5.

"The settings will range from New York

City to the ocean depths to the moon itself," Clark says. "Steelgrip will go anywhere and take on any job, no matter how dangerous the challenge.

"This leads to a lot of rapid-fire action and some very unusual twists and turns in the story."

Each issue of the monthly series will be distributed for direct sales only.

THE SHADOW KNOWS NO BOUNDS

Howard Chaykin writes and illustrates **The Shadow**, a four-issue mini-series based on the famous character created by Walter Gibson. **American Flagg!** creator Chaykin depicts the 1930s pulp hero as he has never been seen before.

"My interest over the past couple of years has been crime fiction," notes Chaykin. "I'd wanted to introduce that to comics for a while. In the series, I show The Shadow as an avenger of crime. I stay away from the super-hero aspects of the character. The Shadow is always The Shadow, whether or not he wears a hat and trench coat. I portray him as a 'benign Dracula,' the way Gibson described him once. I've tried to maintain the sensibilities of the original Shadow and bring him into the 1980s.

"The character is completely self-absorbed," continues Chaykin. "He is motivated by his own obsessions. That sets him apart from his peers in the comic book business. He is a betrayer of confidences—that becomes clear in issue 2.

"The series is incredibly violent. After all, it's a story about violence and crime. It's crime with repercussions."

The Shadow as created by Walter Gibson began as a radio voice and eventually appeared in 283 novels and more than 150 comic book adventures. This series will be available direct sales only.

CREATORS OF CASPER AND MARY WORTH/ STEVE ROPER DEAD

Two very talented people died just before we went to press. Joseph Oriolo, 72, created Casper the Friendly Ghost. His reward 40 years ago was $175. Today his creation is known to virtually every man, woman and child in America.

Oriolo started his career in the comic book and animation fields in 1932 when he helped craft many of the Popeye and Betty Boop cartoons. He also spent a term with the Walt Disney studios.

Although Oriolo had a hand in producing or directing more than 1000 cartoon features, his favorite was always Casper, the soft-spoken spook who refused to join his fellow ghosts in terrifying people.

According to David Oriolo, the famous cartoonist's surviving son, Oriolo senior "Created Casper the Friendly Ghost in 1944 for my sister, who was afraid of the dark!"

Mary Worth will no longer give the excellent advice she was so famous for as her father, and the father of Steve Roper, has passed away at the age of 86. Allen Saunders created some of the comic strip world's most famous characters after giving up his career as a reporter, art critic and instructor in romance languages in 1938.

Mary Worth, or "Apple Mary" as she was once known, provided warmth and comfort to millions during the dark days of the Depression and World War II. Big Chief Wahoo was featured in a comedy strip during the same years and saw one of his supporting cast move up to take over the feature as Steve Roper made the scene. A similar fate has almost befallen Roper since Mike Nomad has become more and more prominent in sequences.

Saunders turned over both strips to his son in 1970.

WOLVERINE—BACK AGAIN FOR THE FIRST TIME

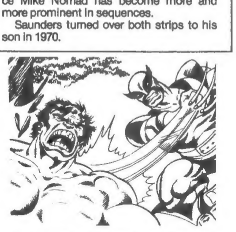
Fighting the Incredible Hulk isn't an easy way to start a career. But, then again, Wolverine's the best at what he does.

Wolverine, the feral member of **The X-Men**, first appeared in **The Incredible Hulk** 180, October 1974. In his two-issue debut he took on not only the Hulk but Wendigo as well, courtesy of Len Wein, Herb Trimpe and Jack Abel.

A special **Wolverine** one-shot shipping June 3 will re-present those historic issues, giving X-Men fans the chance to read the stories they may have missed more than a decade ago.

The issue will also include a 6-page tale teaming Wolverine with Hercules. Written by Jo Duffy and illustrated by Ken Landgraf and George Perez, this vignette originally appeared in **Marvel Treasury Edition** 26.

"Since the new X-Men hadn't even appeared yet, there was no way for fans to anticipate that those issues of **The Hulk** would be so important," Editor Jim Salicrup says. "By the same token, few of them would have thought to look for Wolverine in a **Marvel Treasury Edition**."



The deluxe edition will also feature a text piece written by **Marvel Saga** author Peter Sanderson, revealing the creation of the character through discussions with Len Wein, Chris Claremont, John Byrne and others.

The entire package will have a special wraparound cover by John Byrne and Jack Abel.

The story depicts the Hulk's battle with the mythical monster called the Wendigo, in the heart of the Canadian backwoods. Fearing tremendous damage and possible loss of lives, the Canadian government sends in Wolverine to stop them.

"This is Wolverine in his most primal state," Jim explains. "His idea of stopping the Hulk is killing him, and he doesn't plan to let the Wendigo get in his way."

LOOKING BACK ON THE GOLDEN AGE

BY WILL MURRAY

THE LATE WALTER B. GIBSON IS BEST KNOWN AS THE AUTHOR OF THE SHADOW PULP NOVELS, BUT HE ALSO ENJOYED A LONG CAREER AS A COMIC BOOK WRITER, HEADING HIS OWN "SHOP" IN THE FORTIES, COMPOSED OF THE BULLPEN OF THE FORMER PHILADELPHIA LEDGER SYNDICATE. THIS INTERVIEW IS PRINTED AS A TRIBUTE TO THIS GREAT, NOW-LOST TALENT.

CF: How did you get into the comic field?

GIBSON: I had talked to Street & Smith about doing comics around 1937. But Bill Ralston had said to me, "You can't get them anymore because the syndicate comics are all being used up." And I said, okay, why don't we get up some and sell them to syndicates, get paid by the syndicates and get the rights to use them in the comic books? We could begin with The Shadow. We didn't do that right away. William de Grouchy later came in and then we decided to do comics, starting with The Shadow. De Grouchy was a promotion man. Street & Smith was treating comics as promotion. As soon as they began, I went right in and insisted they use my scripts. Ralston okayed that and so I did all the **Shadow Comics**. But I also did do some of the Doc Savages and particularly the thing I did was some of the Nick Carter stuff. And that's when I met Vernon Greene.

CF: How did the Shadow syndicated strip you did with Green come about?

GIBSON: I went to Ralston and proposed that I would sell it to the Ledger Syndicate. I was still connected with the Ledger Syndicate. I still had a few features running from years before. So I went down to them and they said, "Great." The Shadow comic strip was actually my comic. I was the agent. I sold it, and I said they will also give us the rights to use it in any way. And so the same comics could be taken later and used in the Street & Smith comic books by breaking them into episodes.

CF: One of the strips you later reprinted in **Shadow Comics** caused quite an uproar, didn't it?

GIBSON: In one story, there was a blonde named Valda. The Shadow got into some place that had costumes and was moving around in the dark. And she found a black cat costume. She put that on and she was doubling for The Shadow. You couldn't see her because she moved around in the dark like he did. Well, that ran and was later reprinted in **Shadow Comics**. One day I walked into Street & Smith and talked to de Grouchy. He said, "Oh, oh, we're gonna get sued. We're gonna get sued by the Bell Syndicate." What do you mean? "What have you been doing—stealing their comic?" What do you mean, stealing their comic? "They've got a comic called Miss Fury, and Miss Fury goes around dressed as a black cat." Hey, don't you remember my Valda in The Shadow strip two years ago? That's where they got the idea. They didn't sue.

CF: How did your Ledger "shop" come into being?

GIBSON: When the Ledger closed, there were a lot of artists who weren't working. I was living down there in the 40s and would travel up to New York. We were selling comics to Street & Smith and to Fawcett. Then we did quite a few strips for that Curtis outfit, the name of which I forget. Of course, they owned the **Saturday Evening Post**.

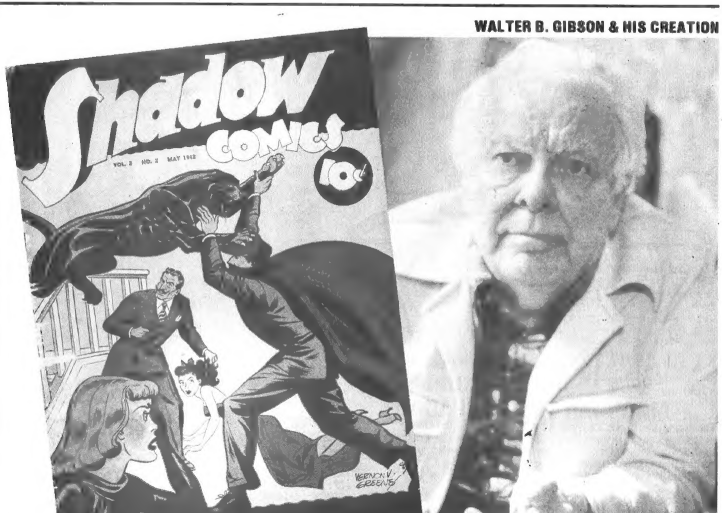
I'VE TRACED AUTHOR. THE MASTER PLOTTER. HE OWNS THIS COSTUME SHOP!
SAY, WE'D BETTER HAVE A LOOK!
DISGUISES FOR AUTHOR'S HELPERS!
LOOK AT THIS TRICK DOOR! IT MUST LEAD TO THEIR SECRET HEADQUARTERS!
FIND THE SHADOW, SKEET! I'LL WATCH. TILL YOU GET BACK!
YOU BETCHA!
I'LL PLAY SAFE BY PUTTING ON A COSTUME MYSELF!
THEY CAN'T SEE THE SHADOW WHEN HE WEARS HIS BLACK COSTUME! THEY WON'T SEE ME!
NOW TO EXPLORE THE SECRET PASSAGE AND FIND AUTHOR!

SAMPLE PANELS FROM THE CLASSIC SHADOW COMICS THAT CAUSED AN UPROAR.

CF: Who were your artists?

GIBSON: We had very unusual artists. We had one fellow named Russell Henderson. And another, Jimmy Hammond. He did Blackston. There was Al Bare. He lived up here in Woodstock for a while. Our art director was Charlie Coll. He was Jack Binder's right hand man. Charlie Coll was an old Ledger artist from Philadelphia. He came to New York and did a lot of comic work. He wanted to stay in Philadelphia, so we opened the studio there. Some of the artists were excellent. They were illustrators and put a real dash in the comics. And I was the copy editor. And that went on for a couple of years.

A TALK WITH WALTER GIBSON



WALTER B. GIBSON & HIS CREATION

CF: How did Jack Binder come into the picture?
GIBSON: De Grouchy didn't know how to get hold of artists, so he looked for someone to do it and ran into that guy Chiseler. His real name was Chesler, but we called him Chiseler. He was a character, kind of a whimsical guy. Jack Binder was his right hand man. So they gave Binder the first **Shadow Comic**. Now they gave him a sort of synthetic Shadow script. They may have taken one of the radio plots. They just wanted to see what he could do with it. When I came in, they had that made up. So I said, go ahead and run it. That was the first issue. From then on, I took over and tied them in with the pulp magazine. So he broke off with Chesler and de Grouchy went with Binder. And Charlie Coll was working with Binder. So he came in handy when we needed him down in Philadephia.
CF: How did **Super Magician** start?
GIBSON: Blackston was playing in a theatre in Boston. I had done books for Blackstone, books explaining about magic, that he would sell with the show for a quarter. The gimmick I had used was to get somebody to publish the books and sell a bunch to Blackstone at a special price. Then they would put them on the newsstands. So he wanted me to do something like that again, and I said you couldn't. They weren't doing one-shots anymore.

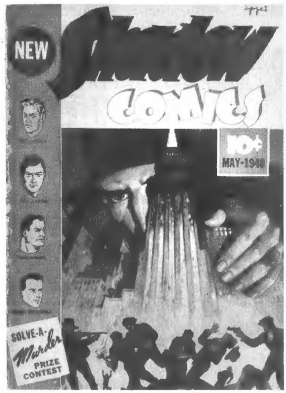
QUITE A VARIETY—FROM SUPERSNIPE TO SUPER MAGICIAN TO THE SHADOW!

Everything was in comics. Well, Street & Smith were thinking of doing new comics at that time so I called Street & Smith and talked to de Grouchy and I said, 'how many do you have to print to make a comic book go over? And he said, "One hundred thousand. We could stand fifty thousand returns if we had fifty thousand sold." I said, fine. I've got your fifty thousand. Blackstone will buy them." We made a deal right then, and I took a drawing room on the train from Boston to New York and knocked out the first **Super Magician** script!

It was a sellout beginning with its first issue, and kept on being a sellout. The only reason I had to quit it from them eventually was because it involved Blackstone, the magician. That was what made it so successful because he plugged it in his show. In their stupidity, Street & Smith said they had all rights to comics. Well, that was all right with The Shadow but it wasn't all right with **Super Magician.** So I called the lawyer on it and he said that he represented Blackstone and Blackstone was letting them use it without any payment. But he reserved the right to do whatever he wanted with his own name. And there was the fact that the Blackstone radio program we were getting up was using some of the same plots that were in the comics. So we had to stop it. And that was when we started **Blackstone, Master Magician.**

CF: What strips did your shop turn out for Fawcett?

GIBSON: I didn't do any scripts for them. All we did was art. Things like Bulletman. I remember when the scripts came through and Bulletman had to go and talk to somebody with an office up in the 25th story. So Bulletman and Bulletgirl zoom up and swing in through the guy's window. I said, that's a hell of a way to start the thing. I said he should drop in and pay a visit like he was an ordinary person. No, they said, we can't do that because they want us to have him zoom like a bullet within the first page. Instead of adopting another self like The Shadow did Lamont Cranston, he had to be Bulletman! They had all kinds of crazy taboos.



CF: What other strips did you write?

GIBSON: I did **Ghost Breakers.** I also did Norgil the Magician because the Norgils were my own stories. And I did the Rangers. The one that Russell Henderson did, that was one of the best ones. The Canine Corps. He just laughed his head off when he drew it. These fellows in the war had these dogs, and they were training the dogs. And in the conversations, the dogs would be holding conversations. And the dogs only came knee-high on the guys, so I had the voice balloons down there for what the dogs were saying while the men were talking above. And they're saying, "I wonder what these goofs are going to make us do next?" And things of that sort. That was a whale of a good comic.

CF: Do you remember working with E.C. Stoner?

GIBSON: Oh, Elmer Stoner was quite a guy. He made very good money. We had him doing the **Blackstone, Master Magicians.** He lived down in the village with his wife. He had an apartment there. One day, there was a big hullabaloo. The guy who owned the apartment house decided to sell the place. They were afraid rents were going to change and all this and they were getting up a protest. Stoner was out that day and he came back in. He stopped at the apartments coming up and he'd say, "I want to talk to you about the house. Don't worry about it, there's not going to be any raise in the rent." Why not? "Because I bought the place." And he became

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COMICS
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INTRODUCING— THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS COMIC
LITTLE NEMO!
THE SHADOW and the GHOST FLEET
NICK CARTER in MONKEY MURDER
SUPERSNIPE - A BOB!

the landlord and lived on the top floor and did his artwork up there. And he was a very nice guy. I met up with him because we wanted somebody to do **Master Magician**. Stoner was quite good on detail. Stoner would do a brick wall, and he'd put all the bricks on it. Somebody else would make it hazy, you know.

CF: Ed Gruskin was one of Street & Smith's best comic writers. Tell me about him.

GIBSON: Ed Gruskin was one of the fellows who came in when de Grouchy was starting his comics. He was something of a radio writer. I don't know if he was trying to get Shadow radio scripts or not, but when he came in, they steered him into de Grouchy. And of course Gruskin was the one who brought in **Supersnipe**. He wrote the scripts. That was a very good comic. The guy that drew it, George Marcoux, had been the ghost for the guy who did **Skippy**, Crosby. So his **Supersnipe** was very much like Skippy. Ed got this thing up and they ran **Supersnipe**. I had a hell of a good Supersnipe for him one time. Supersnipe hears two men talking. They were talking about the planetarium. Oh, Boy! He figures that that's the name of a new planet that they're discovering and that they're getting ready to take a space trip. So he follows them and he winds up in this place and sees this big machine there. The lights all go out and the next thing, they're up among the stars and Supersnipe thinks that they're on their way to the Planet Arium! we loved to come up with crazy stuff like that. Marcoux had a brother who was very good, another artist very much like him.

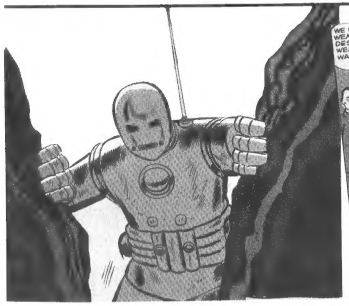
CF: Tell me about the time you predicted the atom bomb in a Street & Smith comic.

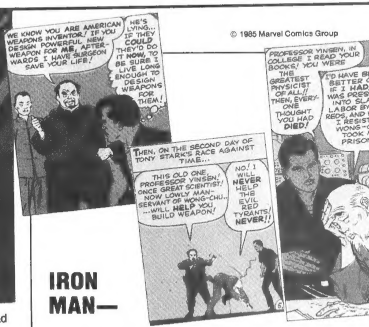
GIBSON: I'm trying to think which title that was. It wasn't **Red Dragon**—that was the one involving Japan during the war. But this was the one where they dropped that atom bomb. I did the script for it. The way it came about was John Campbell, the editor of **Astounding Stories**, wanted to see me. He and I were great friends. He said to me, "Look, I've got this idea for a comic story. These fellows take a plane from a hidden island and it looks like they're bombing Tokyo, dropping all these bombs in the harbor. One is a dud bomb. And the dud bomb just sinks. But it's inside a case and the casing will melt in the water, and when it melts the bomb will go off. So these fellows know they have 24 hours to get away." So I dug into some Japanese lore, and I found out there was a tradition that some day the whole of Japan would tilt up and flop into the Pacific deep. And that's all our bomb did to it in the double spread—It showed the whole island going over! So when the comic came out, immediately the government wanted to know what the hell is this and wanted to know where Campbell had gotten the stuff. Campbell showed where he's picked it up. So much writing had appeared in scientific magazines mentioning the possibilities of this thing that he fit it all together! And that was it. I forget the title. It could have been **Top Secrets** or **Trail Blazers**. On the cover it said, "How to actually blow Japan off the map." And the atom bomb came shortly after.

Will Murray writes the Doc **Savage** *radio show and ghosts a very popular men's adventure series.*

HEROES

BY JAMES VAN HISE

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WE KNOW YOU ARE AMERICAN, BUT IF YOU DESIGN POWERFUL NEW WEAPONS FOR ME, AFTER WARDS I HAVE SUSSION SAVE YOUR LIFE!
HE'S LYING... IF THEY COULD, THEY'D DO IT NOW, TO BE SURE I LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO DESIGN WEAPONS FOR THEM!
PROFESSOR VINDEN, IN COLLEGE I READ YOUR BOOKS! YOU WERE THE GREATEST PHYSICIST OF ALL! THEN, EVERY ONE THOUGHT YOU HAD DIED!
I'D HAVE BEEN BITTEREST IF I HADN'T BEEN PROBED INTO SLAVE LABOR BY THE REDS AND WHEN I RESISTED, WONG-YOU TOOK ME PRISONER!
THEN, ON THE SECOND DAY OF TONY STARK'S RACE AGAINST TIME...
THIS OLD ONE, PROFESSOR VINDEN? ONCE GREAT SCIENTIST! NOW LOWLY MAN-SERVANT OF WONG-CHU... WILL HELP YOU BUILD WEAPON!
NO! I WILL NEVER HELP THE EVIL RED TYRANTS! NEVER!!

IRON MAN—

THE HORRORS OF VIETNAM LED TO THE CREATION OF THE ARMOR CLAD AVENGER

Out of all of the Marvel Comics superheroes who have had a regular strip since the early Sixties, Iron Man is the only one who can't leave his costume alone. Spider-Man has altered his appearance once. The Fantastic Four have had minor fashion conscious alterations. The Hulk shed his rags for a pair of briefs. But practically from his inception, there has been an Iron Man tradition that his armor will be updated periodically (for better or worse) culminating in his current Go-Bot look.

In the March 1963 issue of **Tales of Suspense**, Iron Man makes his dramatic appearance in a title which still contains weird fantasy stories as backup features. What made this character unique was that it took no great leap of judgement to believe in the possibility of such a character. As has been explored in the series from time to time, Iron Man's power derives entirely from his costume, or should I say his armor, and anyone wearing that armor can be Iron Man. In the realm of wish fulfillment, it holds out a lot more promise than waiting around to be bitten by a radioactive spider.

Our hero, Anthony Stark, is a millionaire playboy—not exactly one of the more strikingly original ideas in comics. Even before comic books, pulp magazine heroes of the Thirties tended to have penthouses. What Lee did do differently was make his hero a man with responsibilities rather than merely a member of the idle rich. Tony Stark would be a businessman, the head of a multi-million dollar munitions company with government contracts, hundreds of workers and all of the headaches that accompany running a big company.

Says Stan Lee in **Son of Origins of Marvel Comics** (1975), "I could envision a Howard Hughes type with almost unlimited wealth—a man with holdings and interests in every part of the world—envied by other males and sought after by glamorous females from every walk of life. But, like virtually all the mixed-up Marvel heroes, he'd have to be flawed. There'd have to be some tragic element to his life to provide the necessary dimension of realism—some Achilles heel to make the reader feel pity even while envying him."

Don Heck was chosen to be the artist of the strip and after discarding some possible names, Lee arrived at the name Iron Man.

"The sound was perfect," says Lee. "It suggested might and raw power. It was easy to say and it sounded dramatic. I couldn't wait to rush it to the typewriter."

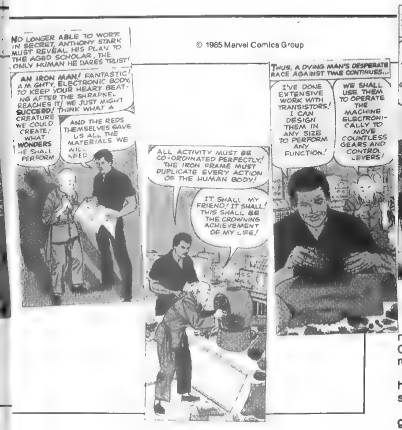
But the need to write a new Spider-Man story, for the first issue of that new title, meant that he'd have to let someone else script the origin of Iron Man from his plot outline. The nod went to Larry Leiber—Stan Lee's brother. (Note: Stan Lee's real name was Stanley Leiber. Stan Lee was his pseudonym for many years until he had his name legally changed to the one which we all knew him by anyway.)

US VERSUS THEM

With the coming Cold War in the Fifties, Communists became comic book villains in lieu of the Nazis that populated the four-color pages of the Forties. This was the rage in the mid-Fifties (best represented by Joe Simon & Jack Kirby's **Fighting American**, although it bordered on being a satire). But it had died down in the early '60s so that monsters and aliens became the menace of choice.

Then the Vietnam War becme news as America made its first tentative entries, and this was well-reflected in the Marvel comics of the day. The first issue of **The Hulk** features a Com-

THE MAN IN THE IRON SUIT


NO LONGER ABLE TO WORK IN SECRET, ANTHONY STARK MUST REVEAL HIS PLAN TO THE AGED SCHOLAR, THE ONLY HUMAN HE DARES TRUST.
AN IRON MAN? FANTASTIC! A MECHANICAL ELECTRONIC BODY, A MAN'S HEART BEAT TO KEEP YOUR HEART BEAT — AFTER THE SHRAPNEL REACHES IT! WE JUST MIGHT SUCCEED! THINK WHAT A CREATURE WE COULD CREATE! WHAT WONDERS WE SHALL PERFORM!
AND THE RED MEN THEMSELVES GIVE US ALL THE MATERIALS WE WILL NEED!
© 1965 Marvel Comics Group
ALL ACTIVITY MUST BE CO-ORDINATED PERFECTLY! THE IRON FRAME MUST DUPLICATE EVERY ACTION OF THE HUMAN BODY!
IT SHALL, MY FRIEND! IT SHALL! THIS SHALL BE THE CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT OF MY LIFE!
THUS, A DYING MAN'S DESPERATE RACE AGAINST TIME CONTINUES...
I'VE DONE EXTENSIVE WORK WITH TRANSISTORS! I CAN DESIGN THEM IN ANY SIZE TO PERFORM ANY FUNCTION!
WE SHALL USE THEM TO OPERATE THE MACHINE ELECTRONICALLY TO MOVE COUNTLESS GEARS AND CONTROL LEVERS!

AND THEN, WHEN THE DOOMED AMERICAN'S CONDITION BECOMES CRITICAL — WHEN HE CAN NO LONGER STAND...
THE LIFE-GIVING HEART OF YOUR IRON BODY, BY MEANS OF CLAMP IT AROUND YOUR CHEST!

munist villain who turned on his repressive leaders. **The Fantastic Four** introduces The Red Ghost in issue 13, a villain so weird that he was interesting no matter what his political affiliation. Even Thor battles Communists in some very early stories. But Iron Man was born of Vietnam, in every sense of the word.

Visiting South Vietnam to see the conditions first hand, industrialist Stark trips a mine and is injured by the blast. Although he recovers well enough to be pressed into service by the villainous Wong-Chu, shrapnel lodged near his heart will claim his life in a matter of days. Working with the brilliant Professor Yinsen (who'd become a slave laborer under Wong-Chu), the duo construct an electronic body to support Stark's injured heart. The metal body works perfectly, although Professor Yinsen is slain by Wong-Chu while Stark lies helpless in the armor as it is first being powered. Iron Man appears as a mysterious stranger wearing a heavy coat and hat who reveals himself to be the nemesis of injustice. Wong Chu dies in the explosion of an ammunition dump.

That is in issue 39 of **Tales of Suspense**. In issue 40, Stark paints Iron Man's armor gold (it was silver in the origin) and the tradition of changing the armor had begun.

Issue 40 features "Gargantus," a huge caveman robot made by aliens from space. The following issue features a villain named Dr. Strange, not to be confused with the Marvel hero of that name.

Communists reappear in issue 42 with a villain who has the not-so-subtle name The Red Barbarian. Issue 46 features another Communist villain, The Crimson Dynamo, a character who would reappear as different men donned the power suit.

While one could easily make a case that it was natural to have Communists as villains in some stories, Stan Lee seems somewhat embarrassed by such tales today.

"For the purpose of the story, there's a North Vietnamese general who's the very epitome of a comic book bad guy. The good guy is a noble American helping the noble Vietnamese battle the sinister Commies from the north," says Lee in **Son or Origins.**

"Now it's important that you bear in mind that this yarn was written in 1963," Lee continues, "at a time when most of us genuinely felt that the conflict in that tortured land really was a simple matter of good versus evil and that the American military action against the Viet Cong was tantamount to St. George's battle against the dragon. Since that time, of course, we've all grown up a bit, we've realized that life isn't quite so simple, and we've been trying to extricate ourselves from the tragic entanglement of Indochina."

While it may be rare to hear Stan Lee criticize his own work, alternate philosphies have always had a place at Marvel. Lee states that, "the Marvel Bullpen is really America in microcosm, and I figure that, like our nation itself, we should be strong enough and wise enough to tolerate every type of ideology. The only philosophies that have no place at Marvel are those preaching war or bigotry."

But the Sixties were a turbulent time for most any superhero, especially a millionaire industrialist in the munitions business. When he wasn't facing "Kala, Queen of the Underworld" (issue 43) or "The Icy Fingers of Jack Frost" (in number 45), he was changing his costume.

In issue 48, ably drawn by Steve Ditko and inked by Dick Ayers, Stark redesigns his armor into the red and gold version which formed the basis of everything that followed. The strange bulky hot water heater look was a thing of the past (except for

AH, CRUD. I DUNNO WHY I WISH I'D SO HORSE
SINCE TONY STARK IS BEHIND ALL MY PROBLEMS, I'LL JUST STOP BEING TONY STARK!
SURE! OTHER SUPER HEROES GIVE UP THEIR COSTUMED IDENTITIES AL THE TIME! SO WHY CAN'T I GIVE UP MY CRIPPLED BODY?! YEAH, FROM NOW ON, THERE'LL BE NO MORE ANTHONY STARK. THERE'LL JUST BE--
AN' I DON'T KNOW WHO PEOPLE EVER ALLOWS, DON'T THE BRAIN. IT'S CLEAREST IN MY UP REAL SHELL ROME. YES. I CAN SEE THE ANSWER.
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ALCOHOLISM—AN UNCOMMON ENEMY FOR A COMIC BOOK HERO PLAGUES TONY STARK, IRON MAN.

rare reappearances over the years).

The supporting cast of characters at this time includes his chauffeur, Happy Hogan, and his secretary, Pepper Pots. They are distant memories in the strip these days.

The Black Widow, then a Communist agent, made her first appearance in Iron Man. Years later in Daredevil, the character would transform in appearance and outlook.

The hero/villain Hawkeye is introduced in **Tales of Suspense** 57 later to become quite a fixture at Marvel, particularly today as the leader of **The West Coast Avengers**.

Captain America earns a backup feature in issue 59 and began overshadowing Iron Man right from the start. But ol' shell head (as Lee dubbed him) held his own until the title split after issue 99. Iron Man's adventure continues in the one-shot **Iron Man and Submariner** number 1 and then immediately into his own title.

ON HIS OWN

Gene Colan was the regular Iron Man artist for some time, until with issue 2, Johnny Craig took over. Craig is best known to comic fans for his horror stories drawn (and in some cases written) for E.C. Comics in the early Fifties. George Tuska then took over the title with issue 5 and remained with it for several years. While Tuska's work was obviously popular with comic book readers at the time, it looks rather drab in retrospect and fails to capture the inherent excitement of the character.

The concept of the armor being Iron Man is first explored in **Tales of Suspense** 65 ("When titans Clash"). A crook finds and dons the red and gold armor, forcing Stark to suit up in his old armor. He faces down and bests the imposter, due to his extensive knowledge of the suits' capabilities. The newer, lightweight version isn't as powerful as the old, and the crook didn't know everything it could do.

This motif repeats in **Iron Man** 18 when a Life Model Decoy built by AIM (Advanced Idea Mechanics) dons the red and gold armor. Stark once more resorts to the old, gold standby suit.

A recurring subplot in the early years had Iron Man needing to recharge his chest plate (which he always wore) in order to keep his heart going. This was his weakness, although it seemed contrived after awhile, and Stark eventually had a heart operation (which became possible due to improved surgical techniques). This sword of Damocles was not missed when it stopped hanging over his head.

Issue 47 (June 1972) features the retelling of Iron Man's origin by Roy Thomas, Barry Smith and Jim Mooney.

Issue 55 begins the Thanos War series by introducing Drax, the Destroyer, in a story co-written by Jim Starlin. This strip is reprinted in the first volume of **The Life of Captain Marvel** miniseries (a direct market only title).

Iron Man's costume continued to undergo minor cosmetic changes during this time, including the addition of a "nose" to the face plate in issue 68.

While it was Hellzapoppin' time in the stories, the artwork during much of this period was often run-of-the-mill. George Tuska returned to the book, and while covers by Jack Kirby and Gil Kane often look very good, they are much more interesting than the work inside. Certainly, Tuska is a good storyteller, but is the story he tells interesting to look at?

With issue 107, Keith Pollard became the penciller. He really seemed to get into the book, bringing a fresh look to its pages.

By number 116, the new, slick look was in full swing and the creative team had shifted again. David Michelinie became the writer, John Romita Jr. the penciller and Bob Layton inker. Romita remained the regular penciller through issue 128, the notorious "Demon in a Bottle" story in which Tony Stark recognizes that he is an alcoholic and confronts the problem.

While alcoholism is common in our society, an alcoholic *hero* is unique. The story is realistic and has a point. Michelinie felt it was an interesting direction in which to go. "When I took over the book," the writer explains, "Tony's girlfriend had left him, his company was being taken away from him . . . what would really happen to this guy? He's got all these problems, he's got to escape somehow. It seemed logical that he might try to escape into a bottle. I thought it was very natural. It hadn't been done before to my knowledge and I thought that would be a hell of a nice story. With Bob's input it just developed and we did it over a period of

CAN'T YOU SEE? YOU'RE BEGGING YOUR OWN KIDS' ENEMY AND YOU'RE TRYING TO KILL THAT ENEMY WITH A BATTLE AS RUINOUS AS ALEX DID WITH HIS AND A GUN.
ONLY I'M NOT TURN NO AWAY THIS TIME. I KNOW YOU'RE SCARED... BECAUSE YOU CAN'T TELL ANYONE BUT FOR GOD'S SAKE LET ME HELP YOU. YOU'VE GOT TO LET ME HELP YOU!
YOU'VE GOT FRIENDS! HE RACKED SCOTT FREEMAN WHO CARE ABOUT YOU. SO STOP PLAYING THE SELF SACRIFICING LONER AND SHARE YOUR SADNESS!
LET US HELP YOU!
OH, WHAT'S THE USE? IT'S ALREADY GONE.
BETH?
PLEASE — HELP ME
OH, TONY
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about a year."

Michelinie and Layton collaborated on a lot of ideas as their work together on the book progressed. Michelinie added realistic wrinkles to the plotting, including SHIELD attempting to buy up a controlling interest in Stark International because Stark decided he would no longer contribute to the world's hellbent drive to destruction. SHIELD felt it was in the nation's best interest for Stark to resume high tech armaments. It was months before Stark was able to contain the takeover, and it helped drive him into alcoholism.

DAYS OF WINE AND ROSES

During their tenure on the book, Michelinie and Layton were interviewed for **Comics Feature** and Bob Layton remarked, "Dave and I are heavily into **Iron Man** but we have a lot more ideas than we're allowed to put into it. The only thing we can't put into **Iron Man** which is so logical. . . we have a playboy in comics who can't sleep with women, a playboy who can't be a playboy in comics. We approached Rick Marschall at one time about doing black and white adventures of Tony Stark, which we could do without the Comics Code, and do real action adventure with guns and people talking like real people, but unfortunately it didn't work.

"We've done two stories, in **Iron Man** 126 and 138, which were the adventures of Tony Stark and Iron Man didn't appear at all. We're trying to show that he's a hero—whether he wears the armor or not, he's a hero. He's that kind of guy. . . if he's in a situation where the armor is not accessible, he's not going to say, 'Oh, I can't be Iron Man. I'll have to let everybody die.'"

"Like the first **Iron Man** we did," Michelinie added, "the second part of the story with the Ani-Men, the Ani-Men are punching him around. He does a flip, punches a button on the wall, a picture comes up and there's a bunch of guns. He's into munitions. He knows from guns. He grabs one and blasts away. That's what a person who knows how to take care of himself would do."

And blast away is what Michelinie and Layton did in Iron Man, creating interesting stories and situations for the character. Especially in 118 when an unconscious Stark is thrown from the SHIELD helicarrier and has to don his armor in midair in order to save himself.

Michelinie and Layton made interesting use of Madame Masque, a character from the earlier days of the title. She becomes Stark's lover until Iron Man is responsible for the death of her father, Nefarious, a villain in his own right. But since Madame Masque knows that Stark is Iron Man, she proves to be more than ordinarily troublesome.

Bob Layton became the penciller with 137 and often did his own inking. During this period it is shown that Iron Man has different suits of armor to meet the demands of the occasion. Issue 142 shows his bulky, radiation proof outer space armor, leading into 143 by Romita Jr. & Layton, one of the most colorful and exciting stories in the series. The story takes place in orbit above the Earth as Iron Man battles Suntunion.

Issue 144 has the untold story of how Iron Man got out of Viet Nam after his baptism of fire way back in **Suspense 39**. It also reveals where Tony Stark met Jim Rhodes, who'd come to work for him one day.

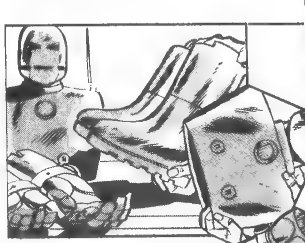
John Romita Jr. stayed as penciller for awhile, the demands of both drawing and inking the book apparently proving too taxing for Bob Layton to do on a regular basis.

Issue 149 and 150 feature a story that Michelinie and Layton had been wanting to do with **Iron Man** for a long time. . . an Iron Man vs. Dr. Doom story. They'd been prevented for some time while Marv Wolfman was writing the Fantastic Four and wouldn't allow anyone else to use Dr. Doom (not unlike what John Byrne is doing now.)

"There are incredible parallels between Doctor Doom and Iron Man," Layton explains. "It's like two sides of a coin: Tony's the good, benevolent, powerful knight; Doctor Doom is the other side: he's powerful and nasty. But both of them have a sense of ethics.

"It's something I've wanted to do from when I was a kid," Layton continues. "I love Doctor Doom and I love Iron Man. The reason I wanted to do **Iron Man** in the first place was because I really like the character. They never did the kind of things I wanted to do in **Iron Man**. He never looked like metal, really. Not totally. I

HEROES



draw him looking like a '57 Chevy, really glossed up and everything. . . Doom is the natural antagonist for Iron Man."

When we first see Doctor Doom in issue 149, he is in the past learning spells from a magician. But upon returning to the present Doom learns that Iron Man has held up a crucial shipment of electronic components he needs in order to be able to penetrate deeper into the past. When Doom steals the parts, Iron Man tracks them to Latveria. During a pitched battle, both Iron Man and Doom are sent into the past by one of the Doctor's vengeful assistants, back to the time of Camelot. There Doom aligns himself with Morgana Le Fey and leads an army of the dead against King Arthur. But when things go awry, Doom finds that he must ally himself with Iron Man in order to return to his own time. While Doctor Doom is an overused character, this two-part saga remains one of his most interesting appearances. Odd that the villain had to exist for 18 years before the clash finally occured in Iron Man's own title.

Since Scott Lang, the new Ant-Man, is an employee of Stark, it was only natural that this character turn up in the magazine. In Issue 133 he journeys into the Avenger's armor in order to save Stark after the systems lock when Iron Man manages to knock out the Hulk. Ant Man reappears in 151 in a story which is pretty much his show.

Issue 152 reveals yet another suit of armor for Iron Man, his Stealth armor, which is black. Leave it to a playboy to always have a new suit of designer wear.

But as all great things must come to an end, and Bob Layton left the book after issue 153. Michelinie stayed on for a few more issues but left after 156. The title hasn't been the same since, although it has had some nice art on occasion.

Paul Smith drew 159 and Steve Ditko drew 160 (nicely inked by Dan Green). But the charge was gone. The title struck rock bottom when Tony Stark hit the bottle again and went on an alcoholic binge that lasted months and months! Rhodey didn't trust Stark to be Iron Man in his condition and took over. Stark only gets his act back together and proves himself to Rhodey in issue 192. Now Iron Man has changed his armor again, looking for all the world like a Go-bot. But if there's anything this title has shown, it's that Iron Man will keep coming back no matter what is thrown at him.

Note: Available on videotape are some of the old Marvel limited animation cartons from the Sixties, including the adventures of Iron Man adapted directly from **Tales of Suspense**. *They're worth checking out, being closer to a comic book itself than to real animation.)*

CF

JAMES VAN HISE IS THE EDITOR OF MOVIELAND AND A CON TRIBUTING EDITOR OF COMICS FEATURE

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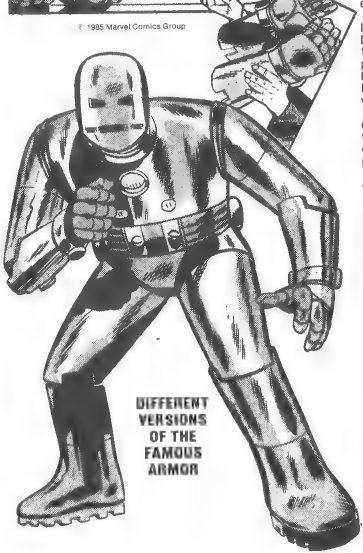


Back Issues

SF MOVIELAND/ ENTERPRISE INCIDENTS

Special 1 (reprints 1 and 2)
Special 2 (reprints 3 and 4)
Special 3 (reprints 5)
Special 4 (reprints 6)
Special 5 (reprints 7)
Special 6 (reprints 8)
9—tales of a Star Trek extra, Triumph of Fandom, The Ion Incident

10—Making Visual Effects ST:TMP, Roddenberry speech, Nimoy and Van Gogh

11—Brick Price miniatures, D.C Fontana on Yesteryear, No Spock in Nimoy, Sherlock Holmes

12—Spock's Death, Wrath of Kahn technical, Evening with Doohan, Day with Nimoy

Summer—Roddenberry Looking Ahead, File on Kahn, Jerome Bixby

14—Wrath of Kahn, interview Nicholas Meyer, Return Jedi, 1984, Making Galileo 7, Mike Minor

15—Vulcans and Romulans, Chekov Planetary Pal, ET, SF in ST, Wargames, The Transporter

16—ST Screen Test, Road Warrior, Role-Playing, Romulan Society, Search Of, Kahn

17—Last Starfighter, Andrew Probert, Dune, Pettyjohn, ST:TMP Visual Effects, Spaceship

18—Phil, Experiment, Splash, Last Starfighter, Mark Lenard, Leela, Robert Fletcher, Dune, Jedi

19—Mutant, Tom Baker, Buckaroo Vanzai, V, Firestarter, ST III, Phil Ex

~~**20**—ST III, Streets of Fire, Last Starfighter, Dune, Baby, Firestarter, Phil Ex~~

21—Roddenberry, Colin Baker, Baby, Conan, Last Starfighter, Ghostbusters, Gremlins

22—V, Shatner, Gremlins, Dreamscape, Last Starfighter, Buckaroo Banzai, Ghostbusters, 2010, Neverending Story

23—Dune, Young Spock, Starman, Red Dawn, Gremlins, ET, Ghostbusters, Tomlin&Martin, De Forrest Kelley

24—Gremlins, Terminator, Starman, Dune, Baby, V, Star Trek, Buckaroo Banzai

25—Last Starfighter, V, 2010, Nimoy, Chris Reeve, Gremlins, Dune, Starman

26—Dune, Bennett&Nimoy, Repo Man, 2010, Bond, v, Runaway, Night Comet, Tom Baker

27—Radioactive Dreams, Star Wars, Kate Capshaw, Dune, The Stuff, Patrick McGoohan, V

28—V, Spielberg, Dune, Stop Motion Animation, John Stockwell, George Pal, My Science Project, Return to Oz

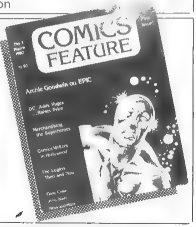
29—1984, Cocoon, Ladyhawke, Richard Jaeckel, Starman, Defcon 4, John Carpenter, Nichelle Nichols, Terminator

30—Forry Ackerman begins column, Lifeforce, V, Nichelle Nichols, Otherworld, Ladyhawke, Terminator, My Science Project, Cocoon

31—Brazil, Cocoon, Lifeforce, Blair Brown, Space, Mad Max, Shatner, Ladyhawke

32—Clan Cave Bear, Sex Mission, Matthew Broderick, Ladyhawke, Mad Max, Goonies, Dykstra, Lifeforce, Cocoon

33—Explorers, Goonies, Mad Max, Cocoon, Black Cauldron, Return to Oz, My Science Project, Michael Fox, Back to the Future, Tobe Hooper, Lifeforce, Richard Herd, V, Disney section



COMICS FEATURE

~~**27**—John Byrne issue~~

28—Interviews writers Titans and X-Men

29—Secret Wars issue

30—interviews Schwartz, Supergirl movie, Tarzan

31—interview Buscema

32—DC 50th anniversary special

34—mutants in the Marvel universe

35—Secret Wars round two

36—John Byrne issue

ORDER ON COUPON PAGE

Games

BY STEVE PERRIN

Lots of new ones this time—let's jump right in!

JUDGE DREDD THE ROLE-PLAYING GAME

A couple of years ago, Games Workshop of England cornered the game rights to the popular English strip, Judge Dredd (now available from Eagle Comics in comic shops throughout the country) and came out with a very playable and enjoyable board game full of Judges, perps, aliens and all the bizarre crimes of Mega-City One (which occupies virtually the entire Eastern seacoast of the modern United States).

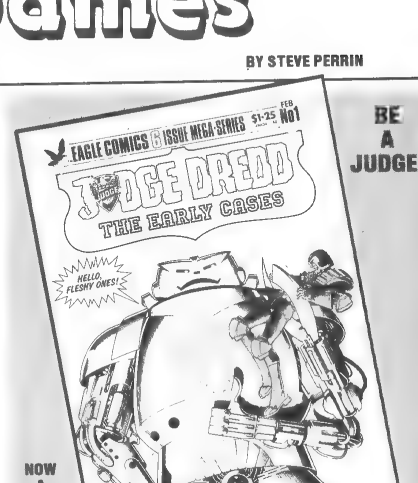
Now Games Workshop has followed up this successful game with a Role-Playing version meant to let you become the new Rookie Judge on the biggest beat in the 22nd century world—Mega-City One.

Unlike other games, even other licensed ones like **Elfquest**, JDTRPG gives you only one type of character to play, The Judge. Within that category, the character can be a Psi-Division judge, a regular patroller, or perhaps a medic or techno, but everyone has to wear the protective uniform and put his life on the line to defend the Mega-City.

The game system has no real surprises for a veteran role player. Each Judge has a collection of characteristics which, in this case, also serve as skills for the character. Thus, the Judge may have a Technical Skill of 35, which means that he must roll a 35 or less on percentile dice (which provide a number between 1 and 100) to accomplish a technical task as designated by the Gamemaster.

Combat is divided up into turns and actions which are remarkably similar to the excellent **Champions** combat system.

Where this game sfiines is, as might be expected, in the depiction of the world of Mega-City One. The authors chose to set the game after the Armageddon War recently depicted in the Judge Dredd comic book. This removes the need to depict Sov-block interference and gives the Mega-City several large sectors of radioactive ruins for monsters to crawl out of. In England, of course, the Armageddon war sequence is already years old, and it only makes sense to depict the world as close to the present version still depicted in the weekly 2000 AD magazine as possible. It makes for an excellent starting place. To quote from the History of Mega-City One given in the Judge's Manual:



". . . many parts still lie in ruins, and irradiated Sectors are dotted around the city. Disease is a common hazard, and pollution is not diminished by tough laws. Unemployment is nearly 90 percent, and many bored citizens turn to crime, often just for something to do. A wave of insane crazies sweeps the city, inspired by controversial vid shows and renegade Juve gangs, and the Judges are ever-more hard pressed to keep the peace."

The authors carefully describe all of the equipment available to the Judges, with special attention to the Lawgiver pistol and Lawmaster motorcycle. In fact, the Lawmaster is so important to a Judge's well-being that it gets its own character sheet. Other equipment available to all the various varieties of perps (crime *per*petrators) is also detailed. There are cursory descriptions of various aliens and mutants available to the Gamemaster to keep the patrols exciting.

Beyond the technology and creatures of the comics series, the game brings the sociology of the strip to the fore, explaining things that may never have been touched on in the strip. Attractively packaged for Dredd fans, there is lots of art directly from the strips to show how the rules reflect the "realities."

Like most of Games Workshop's products, the game is priced ridiculously low for what you get. Included are a Judge's Manual (for the player), a Gamemaster's Book (for the Gamemaster) 60 card-stock figures which can be cut out and used in combats for visual effect, a

BE A TRAVELLER OF SPACE AND TIME WITH THE DOCTOR WHO GAME

double-sided map for use with the scenarios presented and five dice, one each of the common four-sided, six-sided, ten-sided, twelve-sided and twenty-sided dice found in most of today's role-playing games. Just why the usually ubiquitous eight-sided is left out is a mystery best left to the perspicacious methods of a true Judge.

Judge Dredd is an acquired taste in comic book reading. The game is an even more difficult taste to acquire. Game playing friends of mine who are also Judge Dredd fans are still not interested in being cast as a Judge in the urban jungle of Mega-City One. Perhaps they have too good an appreciation of what a thankless task that is!

DR. WHO— THE GAME OF TIME AND SPACE

Games Workshop has latched onto another English import currently popular in the United States—Dr. Who. America's own FASA game company has the role-playing rights to Dr. Who, and I hope to have a review of that game for your perusal sometime in the near future, but Games Workshop managed to secure the board game rights. They have put together a fun little "beer-and-pretzels" game for those who want to replicate the adventures of everyone's favorite Time Lord.

Each player handles a different temporal version of the Time Lord, and each Time Lord attempts to fulfill his own quest for the parts of the Key of Chronos which will save the universe. In the course of this worthy quest he will gain allies, fight inimical aliens, obtain weapons which can warp reality (in effect, change the rules of the game) and otherwise wander around the handsomely-mounted but rather drab game board until someone has all of the pieces.

The rules take up two-and-a-half pages and seem to cover all the cases necessary. A few slight ambiguities of phrasing can be sorted out logically. Play starts off fairly simply, but as the gamers acquire some of the gadgets available, play becomes a bit wilder as the rules are temporarily changed or just thrown out the window. The closest comparison I can come up with is to the excellent party game, **Cosmic Encounter**, in which each participant in a conflict has a special power

that allows him to stretch the rules in a different way.

In all, this seems like a delightful way to spend a couple of hours playing Time Lord. The abbreviated game I played had everyone eager to try again.

One interesting facet is the inclusion of a 12-sided die. Not for the Time Lord is the common-variety six-sider. No, a Time Lord must have 12 sides to determine the outcome of his forays against the laws of fate. I can't think of any other game which uses a 12-sided die exclusively.

This game is recommended for Dr. Who's many followers (who may find it a less time-consuming diversion than the role-playing game) and non-Whoites who might find it a pleasant change from Monopoly. None of the gamers I played with had seen Dr. Who, and they still enjoyed it immensely.

F.O.R.C.E. and ASSASSIN

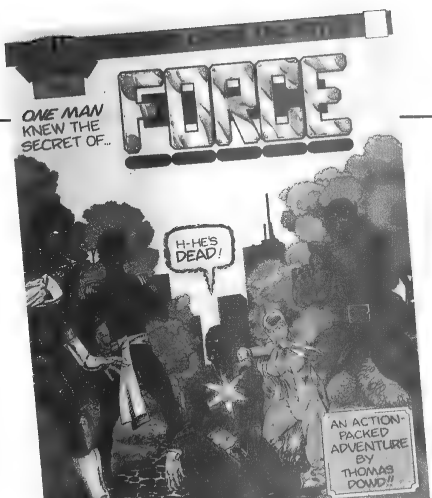
Sometime back, before I began writing this column, FGU published one of their best yet V&V adventures, **F.O.R.C.E.** It deals with the attempt by an organization known as FORCE to blackmail the United States with a bacteriological agent which will blanket the Eastern seaboard via a nuclear blast unless the USA pays the ransom.

Investigating superheroes will find themselves following several potential clue trails and encountering a number of intriguing villains. The final confrontation will probably result in the escape of the main villain, an enigmatic figure known only as Force.

This adventure may be the most unified FGU ever put out. Everything dovetails together and is esthetically pleasing. A couple of the villains are hard to translate into **Champions** or **Superworld**, but it can be done with a little effort. I found that it made an excellent **Superworld** adventure.

And this brings us to the sequel—**Assassin**. The time is a couple of years after the first adventure. Force and his minions are bare memories to the superheroes; but an attempt to assassinate a popular senator suddenly brings the heroes into contact with their old nemesis.

The adventure is full of superpowered encounters, red herrings, attacking armies and other plot ploys to keep life exciting. The heroes are even called on to tell the difference between supervillains and costumed conventioneers dressing up as their favorite supercharacters. By the time the heroes have finished this run, they won't be too sure just who their friends and enemies are.



Both adventures are by Thomas Dowd, and highly recommended.

PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE

Pre-Emptive Strike, on the other hand, is a model of disunity. Australian Stephen Dedman turned in an alien assault on a Titan missile base which is intended to incite World War III. If the players manage to do just what the writer thinks they will do, they can track down the alien and his human co-conspirators and put a stop to the menace forever. If they don't do it right, they get exiled to a dimensional world where they must fight other exiles and rescue another dimension traveler who may be persuaded to get them home.

The player characters are confronted with a number of tricky problems but should be able to surmount them handily. The adventure's lack of unity can be useful in its own right, as it can easily be cut up into two unconnected adventures for two different groups of heroes.

Also included is a reprint of the rules for converting **Villains and Vigilantes** to **Champions** devised by George MacDonald and yours truly. The well-packed **Assassin** had no such room.

MAYFAIR PRESENTS

Mayfair Games has announced the coming of two supplements to **DC Heroes**. I have seen neither of them, but each deserves mention as indication of two directions Mayfair is going.

Project Prometheus is a generic adventure, not meant for any particular hero. In this, Mayfair's approach is quite a bit different from TSR's with **Marvel Super Heroes**. Mayfair encourages its players to create their own heroes. The Marvel game does give rules for creating original player characters but then does nothing to support them.

The **Project Prometheus** adventure involves the machinations of the new King of Crete. Wanting to restore ancient glory, the new Minos has kidnaped Dr. Daedulus to build the Prometheus Shield to protect Crete.

In February, Mayfair is supposed to have the **Batman** sourcebook out. This is written by Mike Stackpole, award-winning veteran gamewriter (**Mercenaries, Spies and Private Eyes** and a host of adventures for various games) and includes, according to the press release:

Background and statistics on most of the Darknight Detective's allies and foes.

Information and statistics on all of Batman's equipment.

A 16-page, pull-out, fold-out map section, featuring the Batcave I, the Batcave II, Wayne Manor, and the Wayne Foundation Building Penthouse.

Three adventures featuring the Caped Crusader.

As a charter member of the old fan organization called "The Batmaniacs," I'm really looking forward to this one.

ORGANIZATION BOOK 3 FOR CHAMPIONS—THE BLOOD AND DR. MCQUARK

Finally, the boys at Hero Games have gotten a new product on the market. It's been a long dry spell since **Fantasy Hero** came out, but this one is well worth waiting for.

This is the third of their Organization books. The first, by Aaron Allston, was rather disappointing. The two organizations detailed there, The Circle and the Metropolitan Extra Terrestrial Enclave, were difficult to fit into an on-going campaign, though bits and pieces were somewhat useful.

The second in the series, written by Andy Robinson, described PRIMUS, a government super-agent organization and DEMON, an appropriately nasty supervillain group. This was a much easier book to use, but suffered in the editing. Quite a bit of information got dropped along the way (such as the statistics for the demons that DEMON was supposed to have on tap for the scenario provided).

Now, the third "Org Book" is out and this time Aaron Allston has hit a winner. The Blood are a family of extra-dimensional half-instants semi-immortals and their various children by human (and semi-human) mates. Each is carefully and accurately described with loving care appropriate to the place I know they occupy in Aaron's own **Champions** campaign.

The Blood, as described, can be easily slipped into any campaign—first appearing as minor background characters, then suddenly blossoming into full bloom as major plot elements. They can even fit into Hero's previous publication **The Great Super Villain Contest**—an addition to the mythos which came, I suspect, from editor Dennis Mallonee's pen. My suspicion centers on Dennis being one of the GSVC's authors.

Each of the major Blood characters is well described, and players are given the opportunity to create their own Blood characters, if they are willing to assume all the toil and travail that will bring them. Good luck to whoever does so.

Dr. McQuark is a lesser entity, but fulfills the function of being the person to whom the hero can go who needs a specific gadget but doesn't have the technical knowhow to justify devising it. I think Dr. McQuark is supposed to be a descendent of Doc Savage (or perhaps the Shadow),"but one can hardly say so in an unlicensed product, can one?

The artwork is probably the best that Hero has published. Artist Glen Johnson's name should be familiar to **Sun Runners** fans in the audience—he's the new artist on that book from Eclipse Comics.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Force Assassin, Pre-Emptive Strike, Fantasy Games Unlimited, P.O. Box 182, Roslyn, NY 11578

Blood and Dr. McQuark Hero Games, 92A 21st Ave. San Mateo, Ca. 94402

DC Heroes Mayfair Games, Inc. P.O. Box 48539, Niles IL. 60648-0539

Judge Dredd, The Role-Playing Game and **Dr. Who** Game Workshop U.S., 9110 F Red Branch Road, Columbia, Maryland, 21046

STEVE PERRIN CREATED BOTH THE ELFQUEST AND SUPER WORLD GAMES AMONG MANY OTHER ITEMS

STRIP TEASE

BY RON GOULART

Back in 1973, when I was gathering material for my book on adventure strips, **The Adventurous Decade** (Arlington House, 1975), I interviewed quite a few artists, writers and editors, both in person and over the phone. These were never published, and this one, with the man behind **Dickie Dare**, is just too good not to share.

It was on May 1, 1973, that I drove from Connecticut over the Hudson to Newburgh, New York. Coulton Waugh and his wife, Odin, were living there in a sprawling farmhouse on some rural acreage. The interview took place in the roomy kitchen with Odin Waugh—who'd been Waugh's assistant and had then drawn the **Dickie Dare** strip herself—sitting close by for most of it. Waugh had kept his strip proofs, pasted with rubber cement in big scrap books, and he opened the books on the kitchen table and referred to them as we talked. There's an airport near the farm and on the tape you can hear an occasional jet zooming over and shattering the rustic quiet.

Waugh was born in 1896, the son of the noted marine painter Frederick Waugh. A painter all his life, Waugh worked as an illustrator and newspaper artist to support himself. He took over the **Dickie Dare** strip in the autumn of 1934, immediately after Milton Caniff left the Associated Press to begin **Terry and the Pirates**. He stayed with **Dickie** except for a sabbatical or two, until it ended in October of 1957.

In the 1960s, with some help from his wife, he drew a panel for kids called **Junior Editors** for AP. He, as he promised himself he'd do, kept painting and had several one-man shows. His **How to Paint with a Knife** was one of Watson-Guptill's more successful books. Of perhaps more interest to our readers is Waugh's **The Comics**, published in 1947. Despite some factual errors, it remains the best overall history of strips ever done.

I found him an amiable and cordial man. Frail, but still filled with enthusiasm for his work, past and present. He died on May 23, 1973, just over three weeks after this interview.

What follows is an edited version of a conversation that stretched over a couple of hours. It is somewhat rambling, moved along by something Waugh might notice in one of the scrapbooks, by my extemporaneous questions or by an interjection from his wife.

—Ron Goulart

COULTON WAUGH: December '34. . . Now, this is the first strip. And. . . would you like me to give you a quick rundown of how I ran into this thing?

RON GOULART: Sure, fine.

CW: I was interested in getting enough time every week. I wanted to earn a living, which is reasonable enough, and support my first wife. Then I wanted to get a couple of days a week to paint. Because I wanted to develop a personal style which would be different from that of my father and my grandfather. You see, we were all painters in my family. . . So I decided that I should get some sort of job that I could rely on to earn a living, and then be free for Saturdays and Sundays. . . And I walked in on the AP, the Associated Press, as being the first on the list. And just out of blind luck, Milton Caniff, who had started **Dickie Dare** for them the year previously, had been tempted by a better offer from the New York **Daily News**. He'd gone over there to start **Terry and the Pirates** for them. See, he took Dickie and turned him into Terry. He took Dan and turned him into Pat Ryan.

RG: Had you done any other newspaper work prior to that?

CW: Oh, Yes. I had been on the staff of the old New York **World**.

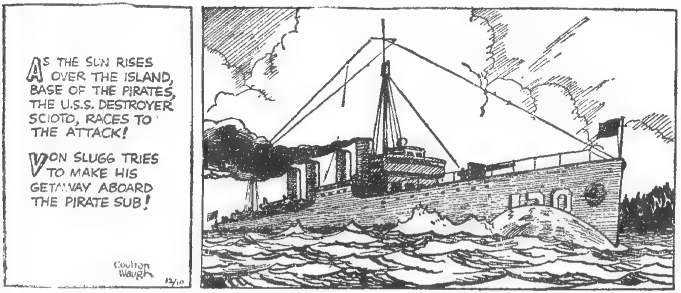
RG: Would that've been when Milt Gross and such were there?

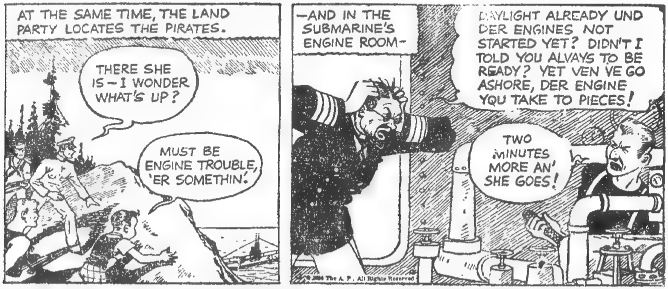
CW: That's right. I did caricatures for them and special pages for their metropolitan section. All sorts of humorous and historical subjects . . . AP gave me a chilly reception at first. The editor, Wilson Hicks, was a very hardboiled guy and he had a whole stack of file cards, and he pulled them out and he said, "See these cards? These are the names of people that I would use on a new strip before I would use you." So I said, "Well, that simplifies things, doesn't it? Okay, goodbye." I pulled my drawings together and started to march out. He said, "Now, wait a minute. Maybe, just maybe I might get you to draw a circus strip for me." I told him to just give me two days and I'd come back with an idea and a week's strips. And I walked out, went home and started in. Next morning I get a phone call from him saying to come right around to the office. He said, "We have this artist Milton Caniff, who does our syndicated strip **Dickie Dare**. It's going very well, has about 160 papers. He's walked away from us. We want to keep it going, but we haven't found anybody. It's sort of based on the sea. And I remembered from your stuff that you've had a lot of sea experience. Maybe you could do it for me." This was it. . . He told me to go back and take Caniff's story and follow it forward and make the next strip.

RG: When he left he was in the middle of a sequence.

DICKIE DARE'S DADDY

DICKIE DARE—


AS THE SUN RISES OVER THE ISLAND, BASE OF THE PIRATES, THE U.S.S. DESTROYER SCIOTO, RACES TO THE ATTACK!
VON SLUGG TRIES TO MAKE HIS GETAWAY ABOARD THE PIRATE SUB!
Coulton Waugh


AT THE SAME TIME, THE LAND PARTY LOCATES THE PIRATES.
THERE SHE IS—I WONDER WHAT'S UP?
MUST BE ENGINE TROUBLE, 'ER SOMETHIN'.
—AND IN THE SUBMARINE'S ENGINE ROOM—
DAYLIGHT ALREADY UND DER ENGINES NOT STARTED YET? DIDN'T I TOLD YOU ALVAYS TO BE READY? YET VEN VE GO ASHORE, DER ENGINE YOU TAKE TO PIECES!
TWO MINUTES MORE AN' SHE GOES!

SEVERAL OF THE EARLIEST PANELS DONE BY WAUGH, PICKING UP ON MILTON CANIFF'S CONTINUITY

DICKIE DARE AND DAN WERE THE ORIGINALS WHICH CANIFF'S FAMED TERRY & THE PIRATES SPRANG FROM

DICKIE DARE
BY COLLINGWOOD WAUGH
BOY! OL' NEPTUNE MUSTA HEARD YOU SAY YOU WANTED A FIGHT!--LOOK AT THAT SKY!
JURY RIG WON'T--IT---IT'S GOING TO BLOW OUT TOGETHAIS OFF IN A MINUTE!
COME DOWN, COMPOUND YOU!---OF ALL THE TIME TO HAVE A HAIRBRD HAM FAS!
HERE COMES TH REAL DIRT--A WHITE SQUALL!
YES, A HIT-AND-RUN SQUALL WITH A MINUTE ON THE HIT! NEPTUNE HAS WON THE FIRST
AGREE---WE'VE LOST EVERY SPAR AND EVERY SAIL WE OWNED! MY HEALTH IS MATTER NEPTUNE HAS NOT YET FAUGHT IT FAIR!

DICKIE DARE--
Dynamite!
By MILTON CANIFF
THE NEWBOL ROUNDS UP ALONGSIDE THE ADVENTURE AS CADGERS SWAP FROM HER OFFICERS
BOATS AWAY!
COUNTER-WALDO
THE FIRE IS WORKING BELOW DECKS-DAN TEARS DOWN INTO THE CABIN
DICKIE! WHERE ARE YOU?
AND IN THE MAIL LOCKER
LUCKY I REMEMBERED ABOUT THIS BOX O' DYNAMITE! -- IF DONT GET THIS ON DECK BEFORE TH FIRE TRAPS ME DOWN HERE----
BOY !!
OUT
SPLASH

CW: Yes. It was on a Saturday. There was an enigmatic note there where the pirate on this submarine says, "Vot's dot? I heard der sound uff an anchor chain rattling! Out mitt der lights! It figgs trouble!" That was how it ended. I asked how it was supposed to go on. The editor said, "He didn't tell us anything. That's what you do." That put me wise right away. If you do the strip, it's yours and you're the one who originates everything.

RG: Then you never talked to Caniff at that point?

CW: No. The only thing they did to help me the least little bit was to give me four or five old Caniff strips that they had lying around. . . Those were of the most terrific value to me, because they showed me his style. And I just boned down and concentrated on this, practically dreaming about them at night. I tried to imitate his style just as closely as I could. So I cooked up a story right away and went on with it.

RG: They let you sign it from the start?

CW: Yes, they did.

RG: You didn't work inside the AP offices?

CW: I worked at home. I felt more sure of myself if I could just be alone with my imagination.

RG: When you came in with your sample week, did you have it finished?

CW: I had one strip. I took it in to show the editor. He just took it right out of my hand, looked at it and said, "Try another." He didn't criticize it or say what's the matter. So I realized there was something that didn't please him . . . it was badly drawn, wasn't fluid. I went back and sat up all night. The next time I came in with one he pulled out a contract. And then I signed up for six months.

RG: How much time did you have before they'd run out of the Caniff strips?

CW: You're always six weeks ahead and they had used up maybe two or three weeks looking around. So they were pretty well up against it. Their problem was this strip was laid aboard a submarine and it was going to be based on boats. The romance of the sea. I knew this backwards, because I'd sailed so much. I wasn't so interested in figure work then. I was interested in boats and in nature and the out of doors. Later I became proficient. They didn't want me to imitate Caniff exactly. Their suggestion was to go along with Caniff's style as closely as you can for awhile. You gradually ease into the things you'd like to have in there.

RG: AP was noted for not paying much.

CW: That's true. The reason for that was that their standing was different from other syndicates. Their main business was their newsline. Their feature service was an extra thing, so that small subscribers could have features as well as news.

RG: You got a flat salary?

CW: We got flat salaries, yes. We didn't get royalties.

RG: I just read a piece that was written at about the time Sickles was doing **Scorchy Smith** for AP. It said he was considered a brilliant draftsman, but the syndicate didn't pay him any more than anyone else.

CW: Sickles was their most brilliant technician. That's the trouble with them, though. What they wanted to do is get the stuff on time. And they had problems with Noel. Despite his terrific brilliance. I think he was rather uncertain about his deadlines. His style was the envy of all the other cartoonists and he was really

DICKIE DARE—
Fate Strikes the Ship
By Milton Caniff
PRISONERS! I MUST EAT!
WITH SIX MONKEY CAPTIVES ABOARD, CAPTAIN CRANKY IS FACED WITH A PROBLEM!
COUNTER-WALDO
-AND FROM NOW ON, SHIPMATES, EVERYBODY ABOARD GOES ON HALF RATIONS! THIS WIND JUST AIN'T TOO STRONG-- IF WE SHOULD GET BECALMED--
LET'S NOT THINK ABOUT THAT!
THAT NIGHT AS THE "ADVENTURE" IS GHOSTING ALONG IN THE ALMOST BREEZE--
DICKIE AND DAN ARE ON WATCH WHEN SUDDENLY
DAN! WEAR THAT? SAIL FLAPPIN'! GOLLY! TH WINDS DYIN' ON US!

GOSH, ROOCH, I GOTTA TRY TA KEEP HER ON THIS COURSE DAN MORKED OUT 'CAUSE THERE ARE SO MANY REEFS IN THIS PART OF THE PACIFIC! BUT IT MEANS SAILIN' RIGHT IN THE TROUGH OF TH' WAVES, ER THAT'S AWFUL DANGEROUS IN A GALE LIKE THIS!
COMICS WAUGH!
A SECOND LATER A HUGE WAVE LIFTS THE LITTLE BOAT UP LIKE A CHIP!
AS THIS WAVE SWEEPS BY SHE WILDLY SCRAMBLES DOWN HER GREEN WATER ROARING OVER HER BOWS!

the one who started that certain kind of thing. Sort of worldly, sophisticated, down to earth and rather sad.

RG: You weren't much influenced by him.

CW: I stuck with my own style, which was really closer to Caniff's original style. I think I was basically not so much an illustrator as a caricaturist.

RG: These strips were done with a pen?

CW: I worked mostly with a number one Winsor Newton brush. I used the brush, see, for the snap lines on the figures. For this other stuff, the crosshatching and all, I used a 290 pen.

RG: When I was a kid, I never saw **Dickie Dare** in a newspaper. I followed the reprints in **Famous Funnies**. Did you get extra money for that?

CW: Well, I think we did. Not very much. What happens on some of these strips, you begin to speed up too much. On that water there, that's a nice sloshy way of working with a brush. It's a satisfying style to work with.

RG: Caniff let Terry grow up. But you never let Dickie age, did you?

CW: Yes, I did. After a long time I got a little bit fed up with Dickie and his twelve year old reactions and, with the AP's blessing, I finally decided to let him grow up and see what'd happen. And he had to get some education. So I put him into a naval school, based on Farragut Academy in New Jersey. I went down there to Farragut and got a lot of material from them. I had a lot of fun and he became, in other words, a naval cadet. Then it gets back into the same old adventures and Dan Flynn shows up again.

RG: Dickie wasn't much involved with the Second World War.

CW: No, I didn't go as far as Caniff. I wasn't as fascinated by the minute details of the uniforms and all the little things as he was. I was more interested in my own experiences of ships and the sea, from my boating experiences. That's what I liked. Sailing ships were my great love. Dickie was my ideal in a way, my own dream. You see, I had been on my own from a very early age because I put out an eye at the age of eleven in a rifle accident. I had to figure out things on my own from then on. I think Dickie represented psychologically a kid who has to adjust himself to the difficulties of the world with nothing but a good natural drive and energy.

RG: You traveled a lot while doing the strip?

CW: At first I was in New York and I stayed there, figuring I'd better keep within call. For about six months, until they were pretty sure of me. Then they gave me a year's contract and I asked if they minded if I went off to Provincetown. So after that I was all over the place. I spent a winter in Mexico. Couple in Florida.

There's the great interest in doing a thing like this.

RG: What about the newspaper strip **Hank** that you did in 1945?

CW: Hank was done at the time that Odin and I were married and we'd acquired some babies. You see, I'd given up doing the strip to write **The Comics**. Odin had been my assistant and she began doing **Dickie Dare** while I worked on the book for Macmillan. But then I decided I could use some more income. It was the end of the war and I had a feeling there were a lot of men coming back from the war without arms or legs. I thought it was an idea worth working with, showing how they felt and their wondering whether it had been worth it and all. I wanted a comic strip that was different in format. It was going to be more abstract looking, not nearly as illustrational. Going to have black balloons and white lettering. And so I began **Hank** for the PM. It was a very exciting paper. They also had **Barnaby**, one of the great strips of all time. **Hank** never had many papers, but it paid fairly well. It was fun.

RG: How'd you get back to drawing **Dickie Dare** again?

ODIN WAUGH: I had been doing it, with my brother writing. Then I turned it over to an artist named Fran Matera and my brother kept doing the scripts.

CW: I was at loose ends about that time and got in touch with the AP.

OW: You called them up and told them you had an idea for a new strip.

CW: And Joe Wing, a man who said very little but all of it was to the point. He had a very low voice and he said, "Would you like to come back and do your old strip?" And—

OW: That's not going to pick up on the tape, when you whisper like that.

CW: Well, that's the way he always talked. Anyway, I told him I'd be happy to do it and so that was it.

OW: And so I was his assistant again.

RG: And you always kept painting all that time?

CW: This program of mine. Nobody believed in it. None of my family believed in it. None of my friends. But I believed in it and it did work out. **CF**

Ron Goulart has had over 140 of his books published, winning awards for his mysteries, science fiction and westerns.

DICKIE DARE
BY COUCTUM WAUGH
YEP! WE'RE BACK IN HAVANA! A NAVY PATROL BOAT PICKED US OFF IN FLOATIN' WRECKAGE O' PINGLE'S UNDERWATER CIRCUS, AN' I'M WORTH 750 AROUND TH' THING I LOVE MOST IN THE WORLD NEXT TO DAN AN' MAGGIE ---
AH SWEET LIL' SAILBOAT, TH' DICKIE DARE, WHICH WE'D LEFT TIED UP TO A DOCK ... AS FOR OL' PINGLE --
WE'RE SAILING IN HALF AN
OKEY DOES IT!
SOME RELIEF! TO BE SAILING ON TOP O' THE WATER, NOW
LOVESICK JENNY
SOME ADVICE! STICK TO GOOD OL' FASHIONED BRUNETTES!
ARE SWIMMIN' IN! HERE'S A RARE SPECIMEN, SURE?
THAT MEANS WE'RE JUST A COUPLE O' MILES FROM LAND!
LET TH' BLONDES SNITCH US!
BY THE WAY -- BREAK OUT SOME LIME, WILL YOU? IT'S IN THE FOREPEAK --
HEY, FOR SNIFFIN' OUT LOUD -- THAT SMELL -- TOBACCO SMOKE!
TO BE CONTINUED --

They remember their glory days, when their adventures were unique, exciting readers with the stuff of legend. hey became legends.

Then time passed, direction was lost as stories began to tire and sag with age. They became shadows of their ormer heroic selves.

But real heroes are never down for long.

Now, with futures bright again, they can relax and take it easy for a moment because. . .

It's Miller Time!

BY JAMES VAN HISE

IT seems like deja vu. Frank Miller taking over chronicling the adventures of The Man Without Fear, radically changing the direction of the book and bringing a large, excited new readership to the tired, sagging title.

When Miller first appeared on **Daredevil** in issue 158 (May, 1979), he was the latest in a long line of artists. With issue 168 he was made writer/artist for the title. To say that his star ascended rapidly would be putting it mildly. When he left the title after 191, it was truly the end of an era.

This is not the first time that a creative force has relaunched a title, generated enthusiasm and then left. There was Barry Smith on the early issues of **Conan**, Roy Thomas and Gene Colan on **Dr. Strange**. And who can forget Steve Ditko's seminal years on **Spider-Man**? But in each case one thing remains consistent, the talents never returned to those characters. Sure, there would be a cover now and then or some fill-ins—Miller himself wrote a wild one-shot return in **Daredevil** 219. But halcyon days have always remained just that. Until now.

In issue 227, Frank Miller returned to **Daredevil**. Once again, he has new ideas to explore!

"What we're pretty much going to be doing with Daredevil over the next few months," explains editor Ralph Macchio, "is to bring him down to depths that he's never been down to before—to really rip him apart physically, psychically . . . all ways possible, and then rebuild him into a different character."

Miller made a proposal to Macchio which the editor approved.

"I'm going to build Daredevil into a simpler character, a cleaner one, and I think a much better one," says Miller. "It is true that what I'm doing is almost an origin story. Daredevil isn't the best conceived superhero in the world. There are several important contradictions at work in the character and I'm getting rid of those. I think he'll be more heroic after this storyline is finished."

RETURN OF A FAVORITE SON

Denny O'Neil wrote **Daredevil** from the time Frank Miller left the book (February 1983). When O'Neil dropped the title, the editor wanted somebody who could pick up where Denny had left off, "And continue what was being done, advance it and really add something that was unique," says Macchio. "I also wanted someone who was associated with **Daredevil** in the past. The best choice was Frank. He was the person who seemed to have done so much with the character in a relatively short period of time. Frank was the first and only person that I called when Denny left the book. I really didn't think that he would take it on regularly. But he thought about it overnight and decided that he could fit it into his schedule. I was incredibly pleased."

Miller states that even though he had been away from the characters for over two years, it never really strayed far from his mind.

"I still found myself thinking about Daredevil a lot. I rediscovered my affection for the character. It was like my first run on **Daredevil** were the first two acts of a play, and now it's time for the third.

"Ralph Macchio called me and I responded by telling him a story that I'd always wanted to do with Daredevil—one of the ones that I was unable to do before. It's really the climax of all the stuff I did with the Kingpin and Daredevil."

But that wasn't the only reason that Miller decided to return. His intention was to concentrate on writing the monthly title rather than spreading his energies into both writing and drawing the stories. In order to do this he had to feel that his visions would be translated by capable hands.

"The other reason I agreed to do the book was that David Mazzucchelli was drawing it and I could see that he was one of the most talented artists to come into comics in quite some time. His work has improved issue by issue and it's a delight to work with him."

And work with Frank he does. In fact, the artist follows Miller's script and suggestions so well that some fans mistakenly believe that Miller takes a major hand in creating the artwork. Actually Miller does none of the art at all!

"Frank and David discuss the direction with me and David pretty much knows where the book is heading," Macchio states. "However, David does *all* of the art. Frank does no art on **Daredevil** whatsoever. Frank does a script which David then breaks down into pencils. Frank gets the script lettered and it goes back to David who then inks it. Frank and David work closely on the flow of the story, what scenes are important and what have you. Frank handles all the scripting hiself. He takes the lead in determining where the book is heading. But David has everything to do with the look of it and is a full collaborator."

SIDE BY SIDE WITH MILLER

"The collaboration with Frank is just that," Mazzucchelli explains. "We are trying to work together as much as we can. We live in different states so we communicate by phone a lot. When Frank came on the book he had a number of ideas about different directions to take about the character. He talked them over with me and we found that we had a lot in common as far as where we felt the character should go. From then on it's been a matter of plotting where we want to put the character and how to get him there.

"We talk over what we want to do. Then we talk about a particular story before Frank sits down and starts working on it. After we've got a bare plot outline, it still leaves a lot that can be changed as we go along. As ideas crop up we talk and then I sit down and do my job. At the end we see

BATMAN AND
DAREDEVIL—
Two Stalkers
of the Night
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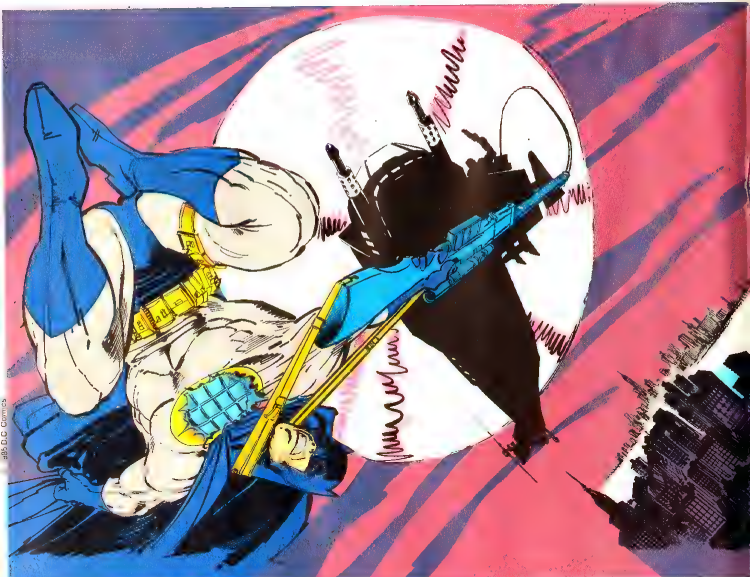
MILLER



how it worked. So far it's worked very well."

David Mazzucchelli joined the staff at Marvel after submitting art samples featuring Daredevil. One of his first jobs was drawing **Indiana Jones**. "Louise Jones was editing the book at the time," the artist recalls, "and she liked something of the mood and atmosphere in the pages that I sent. After I did that story, Bob Budiansky who'd been editing **Daredevil**, saw it and thought he should give me a shot on one issue. Mazzucchelli's skill insured that the assignment would be more than just temporary.

The credits on **Daredevil** confuse readers because they don't delineate the writer and artist the way they're normally listed. Instead they just read: By Frank Miller and David Mazzucchelli.

"We decided on those credits because I didn't want to take credit for the parts of the story that David came up with. It seemed to be fairer and simpler. What I do is write a full script, including some description of what is happening in the panels. But the artwork is completely and entirely David's," Miller stresses. "The way he interprets the script is really fascinating."

In writing **Daredevil**, Frank Miller does not use what is generally called "Marvel Style." This is when a writer creates a plot summary which the artist breaks down into pages and draws, whereupon the writer then adds the dialogue to match the visuals.

"Frank writes full script, panel to panel, page to page," Mazzucchelli reveals. "Everything is written down, but everything is open to be changed. If everything seems to work out, I do it that way. If I have a different idea, I'll call Frank and we'll talk it over. There's a lot of give and take. Frank writes full script for a very good reason. It's much easier to draw a story dealing with characters and what they're saying, doing and interacting with when you know exactly what they're saying and how they're interacting. While I enjoy working in the Marvel Style, I prefer having something a lot more specific. You can feed off that, see what the writer wants and then augment it."

Mazzucchelli recognizes that Miller brought a very distinct point of view to **Daredevil** during his first stint, and that once Miller left the title, that personal focus was difficult to maintain.

"What Frank did when he first came on the book was to give it a very personal and distinct point of view, which you could say that most books do not have. When a book has one, it comes through from the point of the person conceiving the story down to the last bit of ink that goes on the page. When he left, everyone was still reeling from that sense of control and what he did with the character. People did try to keep it going in that direction, but it's difficult to do someone else's thing. I would not try to draw the book the way Frank does because I am not Frank, although I like what he does very much. People did try to keep it in the same vein Frank was doing but it was very difficult.

"From his inception, Daredevil was viewed as a swashbuckling character," he continues. "He was the guy with a big grin on his face who loves bouncing around and beating up bad guys. When Frank came in, that changed. That is probably the clearest distinction from the history of the book. Frank's view was influenced by some of his early talks with Jim Shooter and by the fact that Matt Murdock was a lawyer. In the last issue he had done (number 191) Frank showed rather clearly that we are going to be looking more deeply into Daredevil's head now and finding out more about him. What's there beyond the fact that he became a lawyer and how that molded his character?"

THE SKULL BENEATH THE SKIN

"Ill be bringing Daredevil's dark side into focus," Miller says about the direction the series is heading in. "Daredevil's mental collapse can be traced back to my last issue, his personality flaws from issue one!"

THE DARK KNIGHT CAN BE DANGEROUS, EVEN DEADLY, TO CRIMINALS

THE DARK KNIGHT

THE first new Frank Miller comic art to appear in 1986 will not be his highly anticipated **Elektra: Act of Love** graphic novel but rather **Dark Knight,** Miller's difinitive approach to Batman.

The Batman was one of the very first comic book heroes. The fact that he doesn't actually have any superpowers makes him a down to earth character that Miller can believably use to explore how a powerful crime-fighting figure alters the quality of life in a city.

"Batman is in his fifties," Miller reveals. "He's going back into action ten years after he's retired and he tries to find a new role for himself in society. I think it could be referred to as his last stand.

"I'm thrilled by the series. It's the best work I've ever done! I think it will read very well and that it has depth to it. It is a serious attempt to revive the superhero."

To Miller, the superhero has been lost over the years because there are so many of them. Originally the superhero was unique and ususual. His presence was used to define real life situations in terms that made them more simple and direct. There was a mystical quality about them, particularly with The Batman, because they were measured against their human counterparts. In an age of superhero proliferation, the costumed hordes have reached the level where the only way to make them interesting is to make them more powerful. Otherwise they don't stand out from their fellows. Miller finds this approach the death-knell of the form. In a world where the Beyonder and Galactus stride, where is there room for the human?

Miller has chosen to go to the core of the Batman legend and examine his place in society as a vigilante, to define him as his fellow men would define him.

"It's something that I go into at great length in my Batman series. To tell the truth, I'm astonished that comic book writers haven't done more to investigat the idea since every one the superheroes is a vigilante even though they are not referred to as such."

Part of the sense of realism that Miller is bringing to his four-part Batman series will derive from his observations of crime as he saw it during the nine years he lived in New York City. He relocated to Los Angeles in January 1985 and has been able to sort though his experiences in a different light now that he is no longer in the city that spawned them.

"Just having some distance has allowed me to become much more in touch with my own reactions to what I had seen there. They've become much more focused," Miller states. "When you're in New York, there is something of a concentration camp mentality that is regarded as normal. When you step outside you realize just how intense and violent a city it is in more ways than physical violence. So my perceptions have changed only in that they have become much more sharp."

But Miller is not prepared to unequivocally state (as some writers have done) that Batman's Gotham City is really New York.

Continued on page 31

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MURDOCK MUST BE DRAWN OUT OF HIDING. PERHAPS A THREAT TO HIS LOVED ONES...
TOO OBVIOUS.
BUT...TO TAKE THAT SMALL SHRED OF HIMSELF THAT HE STILL OWNS - TO KILL HIM WITH IT...

THE KINGPIN IS THE CENTRAL FIGURE—

A POWERFUL, RELENTLESS EVIL FORCE

As to why Daredevil has not turned to other Marvel super heroes that he aided in the past for help, Miller explains, "Matt has been heading for a nervous breakdown. In those particular issues (227-233) he is extremely paranoid, trusting no one, not even his best friends. People in that emotional state tend not to seek help from the people who can offer it."

Miller has definite goals for the series. He is not just tearing the character's life apart for the sake of change. Miller wants to be able to tell the kind of Daredevil stories that he couldn't have done on his first go-around on the title.

"I want to do heroic adventures without compromise and without having to explain who the character is. I want to have him capable of behaving heroically without having to sidestep a number of little inconsistencies in the character. I'm a bit uneasy with a superhero lawyer for any number of reasons." Miller has always found it odd that Daredevil fights crime and then as Matt Murdock is hired to defend criminals.

Continued from page 29

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BATMAN IS THE GUARDIAN OF THE CITY

"Gotham is Gotham. It is a magical creation. Gotham is the eternal city. In concept I think it out-New York's New York! The way I'm treating it is for it to be a prototype for an urban nightmare. It's a very nasty town."

The Gotham of fifteen years in the future will be the same and yet it will also be different.

"It's recognizeably different only in how extreme it is. Things are just a bit worse than they are now."

Besides introducing a female Robin, Miller tackles an old bugaboo of Batman fans—the yellow spotlight chest emblem which can only serve as an attractive bullseye target for felons to aim at.

"The yellow circle is actually explained," Miller reveals. "This is one of the ideas that I had for the character over a year ago. It's a trick that he pulls to wear the target on his chest; that's where he's got himself armored. If someone's going to shoot him, he'd rather be shot in the chest than the head, so he's padded his chest. Even so, that's just a cute bit. In the first of the four Batman books, and part of the second, he's wearing the costume with the yellow circle. He switches costumes when one's destroyed and goes to the old one. I switched to the other costume because I think it's better designed. It looks better by virtue of being simpler."

Klaus Janson, the inker on Miller's classic **Daredevil** issues, is also inking his **Batman** series. But just as important to his art's effectiveness, Miller feels, is the coloration of Lynn Varley.

"The really important work in color that's been done in comics recently has been done by Lynn. There is other good work going on but it is still in its very early stages. It's a much neglected part of the work. Obviously, in the better formats, coloring is as important as any other stage of the artwork. It's crucial and very powerful. In pulp comics it's much less important but it still gets across a great deal of story value if it's done well. An example is Trevor Von Eeden's **Batman Annual** (number 8, 1982). Trevor did just a spectacular job on it, but beyond that Lynn Varley took the theme of the story and brought it further into the artwork. I can hold that up as an example of a pulp comic done extraordinarily well."

Miller's Batman mini-series will be four comic books beginning in March, 1986.

"It's four 48 page books," Miller explains. "Each has a complete story forming a large story. The best way I've been able to describe it is an operatic finale to superheroes." **CF**

"When I was writing the series before, I used that contradiction to create tension. But ultimately it weakens the character. The best characters are those based on the simplest idea. The rest of the early Marvel superheroes had much more integrity in character than Daredevil did, which is why he was always a weak sister to the other books. There is something in his character that is very valuable and that makes him a very good hero. What I've been doing is streamlining that—strengthening that.

"Daredevil works best as something like the original incarnation of Superman," Miller adds. "A real common man character in that his love is for down-to-earth people. Matt Murdock has been too much of a Yuppie, making too much money, for me to buy him as a common man hero. What I'm doing is taking him back to Hell's Kitchen and making him much more of a common man. He'll be in touch with what crime does to people. In his life up until now, the only relationship he's had to crime is his clients. Now he's going to

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WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR MOUTH, KAREN?
THAT'S PAULO. THE MAN I'M WITH. HE'S PRETTY AWFUL.
LIKE TO GET MY HANDS ON THAT RAT--
DON'T-- JUST DON'T, FOGGY.
I JUST NEED TO KNOW WHERE MATT IS. HE-- I CAN'T TELL YOU WHY BUT HE'S THE ONLY MAN WHO CAN SAVE ME.
MATT'S DISAPPEARED, KAREN. A LOT HAS HAPPENED.
OUR LAW FIRM WENT OUT OF BUSINESS, MATT --WELL, MATT'S BEEN ACTING CRAZY, FOR SOME TIME NOW, THEN HE WAS CHARGED WITH CRIMINAL MISCONDUCT.
NOT MATT. NO.
© 1980 Marvel Comics Group

KAREN PAGE IS CHANGED—SHE REPRESENTS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT LIFE THAN MATT IS USED TO.

be surrounded by crime. The cast is going to represent more different stratas of society than it used to. Karen Page is going to be important. She's changed and now represents a completely different kind of life than what Matt has been exposed to. He's going to be more a part of the city. He doesn't have a big comfortable house that shelters him from it any more. He lives like a New Yorker does."

But just because Daredevil is being beaten almost beyond recognition by the current creative team doesn't mean that they have anything against the character. The Horrors Daredevil has been enduring are meant to cleanse him so that he'll come out stronger because of the intense adversity he's suffered.

"I really love the character," Miller insists, "and he's going through some profound changes, but he's still Matt. There's nothing I'm doing that contradicts what I did before on the book. It feels more like a payoff for every Daredevil story that I've written. His relationship with the Kingpin will become much more sharply defined as they're in a war that can't be ended in a truce."

The current storyline of the fall of Matt Murdock and the rise of Daredevil will climax in issue 233 which will also feature The Avengers, and in particular Captain America.

"A great deal happens in those issues. That's really the one where the character is turned around. Walt Simonson has been referring to working on a monthly book as working in *cycles*. I like that term a lot because then a run can really stand as its own entity. This cycle climaxes in 233, which is presently planned to carry no ads."

THE NATURE OF ADVENTURE

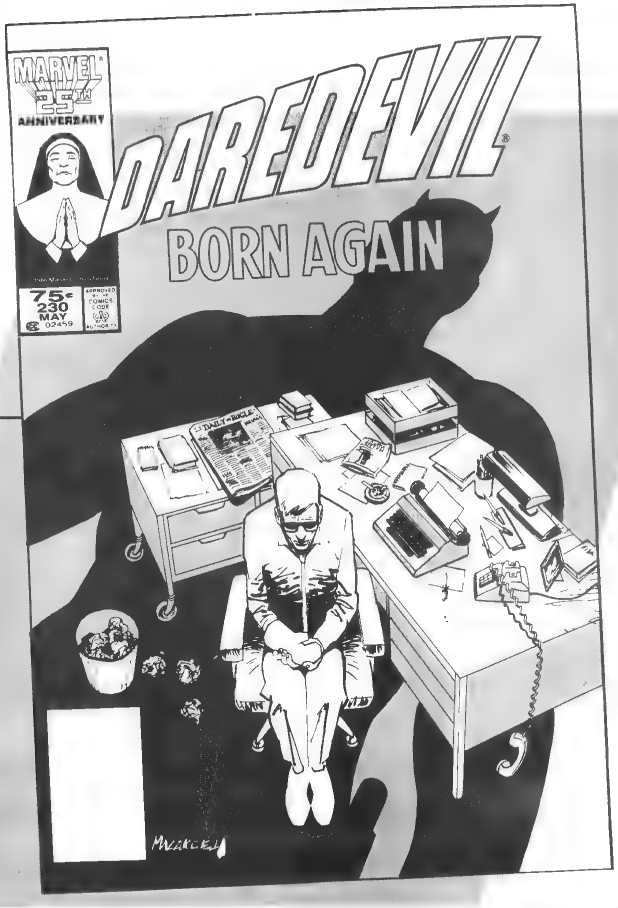
Miller feels that although comic books are crowded with heroes, there is not a great deal of heroism. This is what he is exploring in **Daredevil**.

"The problem is that even though it's obvious who the hero is and who the villain is—the heroes are not heroic. The heroes behave too much like impetuous little children. I'm planning the focus of my work to define what a hero is. I feel they've gotten pretty cancerous. The characters have lost their stature and there *are* a few characters who are worthy of serious stature—such as Superman and Batman. The idea of the hero has to be redefined for modern times. It's still working off the model of the Forties, somewhat turned inside out in the Sixties, but we live in very different times.

"I feel that writers tend to make it too easy for the heroes to be virtuous. Since virtue and character are defined by conflict, I set out to test Daredevil's virtue. I put him in situations where he has to do bad things to achieve good things. Daredevil was then, and is now, a fiercely moral man."

Miller believes that the main problem with comics is that they reflect the approaches taken in the other entrtainment media, and that the rest of the entertainment media is in terrible shape.

"Adventure is virtually a dead form right now," he observes. "Very few people have any idea what to do with it. With the increasingly oppressive atmosphere toward entertainment, the material is getting blander and less interesting. The whole entertainment industry is heading towards a Saturday morning mentality and I regard Saturday morning cartoons as very sinister precisely because they don't have any values. The quality of Saturday morning cartoon is why we have generations growing up who can't believe in anything. They're protected from anything with strong emotional content. It's a ridiculous idea that sex and violence can be treated like commodities—that they don't have any values positive or negative. This is really poisoning our culture because sex and violence are the two basic components of drama. We're losing drama and what we're getting is sterile and offers nothing that fiction is capable of giving to people. I've grown sick of movies and television which are designed to make me more comfortable. They're like sedatives and these are times when we should not be sedated but aware because the world's in terrific trouble. The film industry has failed to do anything except try to be reassuring. There are a number of things that come out that have something behind them, but they don't reflect the general state of film. I think that **Country** is an example of a movie with thought behind it and serves a very good purpose. It points out an issue that most Americans are evading."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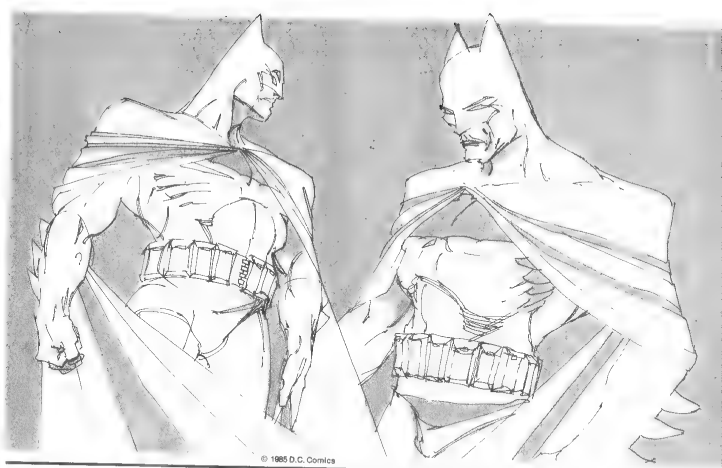

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Miller does feel that there is worthwhile work being done in comics that is creating bold new trends and showing the direction to revitalize the form.

"This particular attitude towards heroes that I've been talking about is my particular slant on it, but there's definitely an effort going on by the more committed creators in the field. Alan Moore's work (Note: On DC's **Swamp Thing**) has changed comics profoundly and given us all a better idea of what can be done."

ARTISTIC INFLUENCES

Anyone who has read Miller's writing can see that he brings more to a story than appears in most comic books for the last fifteen years. Miller's sources and standards of creative excellence are derived from outside the comic field. That is why when he tackles a costumed hero, it doesn't read like anything we've seen in comic books before.

Asked which books and writers have influenced him, Miller says that this changes every month. A few strong ones do come to mind.

"The great detective writers are among my favorites. Dashiell Hammett is probably the writer whose work I'll always love. Recently Jim Thompson has been an exciting writer for me—his stuff is very powerful.

"A great deal of non-fiction influences me," Miller continues, "because the problem I'm finding with a great number of superheroes is that implicit in the way they're done is an incorrect view of how society operates. A book called **The Culture of Narcissism** by Christopher Lash is a particular example of something that helped me with the stories that I'm doing now, particularly with the Batman series.

"A book which has taught me a great deal about developing certain kinds of characters is **People of the Lie** by M. Scott Pecks, M.D..

"And then, of course, there's movies," Miller explains, "real life and all kinds. I try to keep in touch with everything that's going on in films. There's very few movies I avoid except for the toy movies—space opera doesn't interest me that much. I try to keep my eyes open, though. I don't want to cut off any particular route that can carry something. Even a bad movie can teach me. As far as directly relating to adventure material, I think that Clint Eastwood's work is the strongest. There's a great deal that comics people could learn from it."

DAREDEVIL AND BEYOND

Even before taking over the writing of the monthly **Daredevil** comic book, Frank Miller had been at work on two other Daredevil-related projects.

One is a **Daredevil** graphic novel which is written by Miller and drawn (painted, actually) by Bill Sienkiewicz. This story, like the current monthly series, focuses on the Kingpin, but in a different way as it explores the relationship between the crime lord and his wife, Vanessa. She has been suffering from a mental illness for some time that will be resolved in the graphic novel, which Miller describes as basically a love story.

"For all the action in it, and there's tons, the heart of the story is the Kingpin's love for Vanessa and his struggle to restore her. She has been, from Stan Lee's stories on, his weak link. The Kingpin is the central villain in my stories—a powerful, relentless evil force. Vanessa is his one love. His one virtue. Just as Daredevil is tortured by his own private weaknesses, his evils, so the Kingpin is tortured by the only good thing about himself. How far will he go to save her and whether he will succeed is explored in the graphic novel." (The Daredevil graphic novel is already written and presently is being drawn by Sienkiewicz.)

Sienkiewicz is also drawing an Elektra mini-series to appear sometime this summer or fall. Elektra is a character created by Frank Miller during his first stint on **Daredevil** who came to be a pivotal figure in the series. Elektra Natchios had been Matt Murdock's lover during his college days but their paths diverged when her father was slain by criminals. She went on to train as a deadly ninja assassin who would sign on to the highest bidder. When she was slain by Bullseye in **Daredevil** 181, Matt

COMICS FEATURE wishes to thank Frank Miller for providing us and his many fans with the beautiful original sketches from his upcoming BATMAN graphic novel that grace this article.

Murdock nearly went insane. As best as he could, he came to terms with her death but never knew that she was resurrected in issue 190.

In the **Elektra: Act of Love** graphic novel (to be published prior to the mini-series), Matt Murdock slowly learns that she is alive—a fact which, to him, seems impossible to believe. The Elektra graphic novel will be both written and drawn by Miller. While Daredevil is appearing in the Elektra graphic novel, he will not guest star in the eight-issue limited series that is set prior to her first appearance in **Daredevil** and will fill in some of the gaps in her past.

Over at D.C., Miller has written and drawn a four-part mini-series featuring the Batman in a tale set 15 years in the future. It will appear as four 48-page monthly issues beginning in March 1986 (see accompanying close-up on this series).

With all of the new projects appearing from Miller, one past favorite will not be included. For a time, the pages of **Daredevil** seemed to be overflowing with ninjas. But that's a vein which Miller feels he has exhausted.

"I have a habit of finding a theme or a motif and becoming fanatic about it, investigating it. And then, very often, I'll just as quickly drop it. The important thing is to stay fresh—to keep bringing in different things. For the past year or so I've been involved with my New York experiences and with the social and psychological aspects of heroism, adventure and life in general. So I've got no great plans to do a lot of ninja comic books."

When asked if he feels his work in **Daredevil** now will have impact, Miller replies, "That's the kind of question that's very hard to answer. I would rather have somebody else answer it after everything is out. I can't say upfront that I believe my work's going to have a good effect on anybody. All I'm concerned with is doing the work as well as I can. The effects of it are secondary. But I think that in presenting a hero you're doing something very positive. There is a morality play going on in **Daredevil** that I believe has positive thought behind it and a very positive conclusion."

CF

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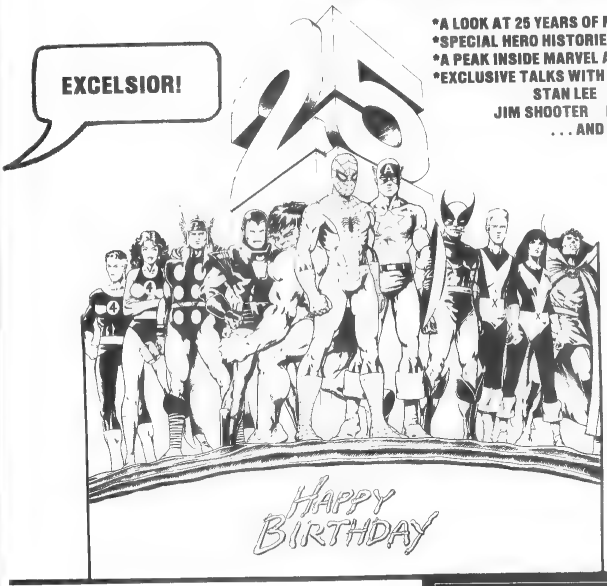

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☐**Secret Origins 3**—Capt. Marvel's origin. Roy Thomas.

☐**Amethyst 15**—Giffen &Fleming/Colon & Kesel. Castle Amethyst destroyed and a royal leader dies.

☐**'Mazing Man 6**—Rozakis/DeStefano/Kesel

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☐**Booster Gold 5**—Jurgens/DeCarlo Meet the Fascinator

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☐**The Dark Knight Returns** (Number 1 of a 4-issue Batman series. Direct sales only. Frank Miller/Klaus Janson.

SHIPPING 2/4/86

Tales Of The Legion Of Super-Heroes 336—Levitz/Colon/Mahlstedt/Lightle)

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☐**Deadman 4**—Last issue. Helfer/P-I-C—Garcia-Lopez

☐**DC Challenge 8** (of 12)—Conway/Hoberg/Giordano/Cullins. Enter the Outsiders and New Gods.

Lords Of The Ultra Realm 1(of 6)—Direct sales only. Moench/P-I-C—Broderick.

☐**The Shadow 2** (of 4)—Direct sales only. Howard Chaykin.

MARVEL COMICS

SHIPPING 2/4/86

☐**Dakota North 1**—Detective action by Thomases/Salmons.

☐**Daredevil 231**—The Daredevil returns by Miller/Mazzucchelli.

☐**New Mutants 40**—Claremont/Guice.

☐**Squadron Supreme 10** (of 12)—Gruenwald/Ryan/DeLaRosa. The death of two Squadron members!

☐**The Thing 36**—She-Hulk and the New Ms. Marvel by Carlin/Neary.

☐**Web of Spider-Man 15**—Michelinie/Harris/Baker

☐**West Coast Avengers 9**—Englehart/Milgrom/Sinnott

SHIPPING 2/11/86

☐**Alpha Flight 35**—Mantlo/Ross/Talaoc. Debut of the new, regular penciller, Canadian David Ross. The rebirth of Shaman.

☐**Amazing Spider-Man 277**—Guest writer/artist Charles Vess. Ties in with current Daredevil storyline.

☐**Captain America 318**—Gruenwald/Neary/Janke. Beginning of "The Scourage" trilogy.

☐**Doctor Strange 77**—Gillis/Warner/Emberlin.

☐**Firestar 4** (of 4)—DeFalco/Wilshire/Leialoha. Firestar battles the White Queen

☐**Groo The Wanderer 16**—Aragones with Evanier. An Epic comic.

☐**Power Pack 23**—Simonson/Bogdanov/Wiacek Fantastic Four, Franklin Richards and the Snarks.

☐**Vision/Scarlet Witch 9** (of 12)—Englehart/Howell/Springer. Cover by Howell/Springer.

☐**Fantastic Four Index 7**

☐**The Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe 7**

☐**Savage Sword of Conan 124**

☐**Bozz Chronicles 3**—Direct Sales only. Michelinie/Blevins/Williamson. Cover by Blevins.

☐**Heathcliff 8**

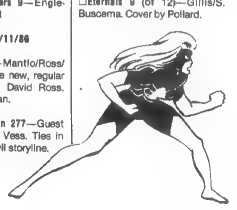
SHIPPING 2/18/86

☐**Marvel Age 39**

☐**Avengers 268**—Stern/J. Buscema/Englehart. Second of three parts.

☐**Conan the Barbarian 183**—Owsley/J. Buscema/Chan.

☐**Eternals 9** (of 12)—Gillis/S. Buscema. Cover by Pollard.



☐**G.I. Joe 48**—Hama/Whigham/Mushynsky. Cover by Anderson.

☐**Incredible Hulk 320**—Milgrom.

☐**Marvel Tales 188**—Lee/Romita /Esposito. Reprinting "Wings of the Vulture" from SPIDER-MAN 48.

☐**X-Men 206**—Claremont/Romita, Jr./Wiacek. Cover by Romita, Jr. Guest starring Jessica Drew, the new Spider-Woman and the Freedom Force.

☐**Marvel Saga 7**—Art by Windsor-Smith, Kirby, Ditko, Romita Jr., and Layton. Cover by Brent Anderson.

☐**Dreadstar 24**—Direct sales only. Starlin writes, pencils and does the cover, and Sherman inks.

SHIPPING 2/25/88

☐**Elquest 11**—Wendy & Richard Pini—An Epic comic.

☐**Fantastic Four 291**—Byrne-writer & penciller/Russell. FEaturing the search for Reed Richards (in 1936!) with Nick Fury.

Iron Man 207—O'Neil/Bright/Akin & Garvey.

☐**Peter Parker 115**—David/Beachum/McLeod-Cover by Buckler.

☐**Thor 368**—Simonson.

☐**Transformers 17**—Budiansky/Perlin/Williams. Cover by Trimpe. This is the conclusion of the two-parter, "Return to Cybertron." Introduces the new Transformers.

☐**X-Factor 5**—Layton is writer and inker/Guice with both on cover.

☐**Marvel Team-Up Index 4**

Doctor Who 21—Direct sales only.

☐**Alien Legion 13**—Direct sales only. Zelenetz/Stroman/Emberlin.

The following are direct sales only.

Eagle

☐2000 AD Monthly 3

☐Judge Dredd, The Early Cases 5

☐Judge Dredd 32

☐Judge Dredd Graphic Novel

ECLIPSE

☐The New DNAgents 6

☐Laser Eraser & Pressbutton 4

☐Miracleman 6

☐The Twisted Tales of Bruce Jones 2

FIRST

☐Nexus 21

☐Badger 12

☐Grimjack 23

☐Whisper 1

SHIPPING 2/14/88

☐American Flagg 30

☐Dynamo Joe 2

SHIPPING 2/21/88

Eric: Sailor on the Seas of Fate 7 (of 7)

☐Jon Sable, Freelance 37

☐Shatter 3

Kitchen Sink

☐Death Rattle 3

☐Megaton Man 8

Americomics

☐Dragonfly 3

☐Faze One 3

☐Sentinels of Justice 3

Archie

☐Archie 341

☐Laugh Comics Digest 54

☐Archie's Pals N Gals 181

☐Archie's Activity Book Digest 3

☐Pep 406

☐Life with Archie 254

☐Archie's Double Digest 22

☐Jughead with Archie Digest 74

☐Betty & Me 151

☐Everything's Archie 123

☐Archie Annual Digest 48

Comico

☐Robotech Masters 6

☐Elementals 6

☐Mage 6

☐Robotech, the Macross Saga

Eclipse

☐Scout 4

☐Alien Encounters 5

☐The Offical Doom Patrol Index 1

☐Mr. Monster 5

☐The Twisted Tales of Bruce Jones 1

☐The Masked Man 8 (of 9)

☐Seduction of the Innocent 4

☐The Official Doom Patrol Index 2

STAN LEE SOUNDS OFF

This all-too-brief column is one that I've been putting off for days because I don't want to write it!

No, I'm not mad at you. No, I haven't run out of ideas. No, I'm not tired of writing. The true explanation is far less dramatic but far more compelling.

As you probably know (because I've mentioned it ad nauseam), I'm out here in California working on mighty Marvel's many magniloquent movie projects. As those of you who read last issue's **Comics Feature** also undoubtedly know, I had planned to open a long, informative, never-to-be-forgotten series of articles for yon prestigious publication about how to write comics.

Now comes the heart-tugging part.

You know the jokes that begin with, "First the good news, then the bad." Well, that explains my perplexing predicament. So first, the good news...

Suddenly, all of Marvel's long-awaited movie projects are starting to steamroll ahead, moving at top speed. **Howard the Duck** is already in production, with George Lucas as executive producer. **Dr. Strange**, written by Bob Gale who also co-authored **Back To The Future**, is almost ready to go before the cameras. Screenplays for **Spider-Man** and **Captain America** are now being written and Spidey and Cap will probably be the next Marvel musclemen to reach the screen. Plus, we're preparing to launch **The Fantastic Four**, **Daredevil** and **Power Man** almost before you can catch your breath!

If you think that sounds exciting, take my word for it—it is!

And now, the bad news...

Due to all those projects reaching the starting gate so soon, I simply don't have the time to continue writing these fabulous feature articles in the foreseeable future. So there goes my chance to win this year's Pulitzer Prize for column writing!

However, when you least expect it, when your defenses are down and your portals unguarded, there's always the chance that The Man From Marvel will be back!

So, many thanks to Happy Hal Schuster for allowing me to chew your ears off for the past six months. And thanks to you for all the mail I've received—the postcard's being framed right now. It's been great visiting with you, and I hope we can do it again real soon.

And now, it's back to the ol' film-making grind for yours truly. Let's just hope poor Steven Spielberg isn't worrying too much about the impending competition!

Excelsior!

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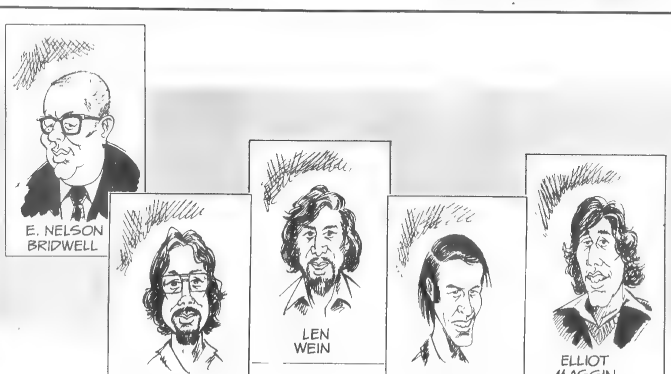
SILVER AGE

BY WILL JACOBS & GERARD JONES



Dropping sales at DC prompted a number of new experimental titles as well as a radical overhauling of several minor old ones. But sales continued to drop, and it became apparent that even the mainstays would have to change. It would begin slowly, and without a clear direction, but it would ultimately sweep away virtually everything on which the Silver Age had been founded.

One major event that made the changes inevitable was a drastic shift in DC's personnel. DC's major writers, all veterans of many years who had toiled as freelancers, were becoming alarmed about the field's shaky stature; concerned over their futures, particularly the financial worries of retirement, they became involved in a dispute with their employers. Gardner Fox remembered, "Several of the writers, myself included, got together to ask for certain fringe benefits from that outfit. Medical insurance, some sort of plan to lay aside some of our income for a retirement pension, that sort of thing. Jack Leibowitz didn't like the idea, so we were soon out on our necks... Bill Finger, France Herron, Arnold Drake and Otto Binder."

NEW WRITERS

To fill this vacuum, DC had to recruit new writers and promote minor ones to major positions. Almost overnight, Denny O'Neil and Weisinger's assistant E. Nelson Bridwell were cropping up all over the place, newspaper comic strip writer/artist Frank Robbins was drafted into the fold and fans Cary Bates and Mike Friedrich broke through into professionalism, followed shortly by Len Wein, Marv Wolfman, Elliot S! Maggin and Marty Pasko. With all these new writers would come, inevitably, a new slant to the old heroes.

Another major factor in these changing times was the breakdown of the editorial monoliths. Now, with Carmine Infantino overseeing the entire line, there was no longer any need for each editor to run his stable as if it were an independent company. Infantino's own promotion had left a gap on both the **Flash** and **Detective Comics**. Schwartz filled them with Kanigher's principal artist Ross Andru and Schiff's Bob Brown respectively. Giordano's writer Denny O'Neil replaced Fox on the **Justice League of America**. Cary Bates worked for both Schwartz and Weisinger, as did Andru. Neal Adams and Gil Kane worked for everybody, including Marvel. Suddenly, the readers no longer knew who would turn up in the pages of **Flash** or **Superman**.

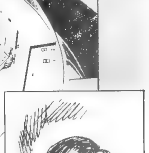
Despite these new arrivals, the editors maintained the basic elements of their particular styles. Cary Bates, for example, wrote like a Weisinger man when he scripted **Superman** and like a Schwartz man when he scripted **Flash**. Almost imperceptibly, however, changes manifested themselves. No editor, no matter how strong his personality, could stand for long against the influx of new talents and visions that was beginning to flood the field.

SPIRAL ZIP FROM THE COMIC BOOK HEROES: JACOBS & JONES ARE FABULOUS! CONTRIBUTORS TO NATIONAL LAMPOON

THE END OF AN ERA

DENNY O'NEIL

A NEW GROUP OF WRITERS, MOSTLY COMIC BOOK FANS THEMSELVES, CAME ON THE SCENE TO REPLACE THE OLD. THE ARTIST'S STABLE CHANGED AS WELL.



MARTY PASKO

FIRST SIGNS

The few changes that took place immediately can be seen by briefly examining one title, the **Justice League of America**, in the hands of Denny O'Neil. Largely, these changes revolved around characterization. Green Arrow, perhaps the most cardboard comic character of all time, became a hot-headed champion of the downtrodden. Black Canary moved from Earth-2 to Earth-1 following the death of her husband and became a modern young woman instead of an aging nostalgic heroine. Martian Manhunter, who would yield the least to modern ideas of characterization was sent off to New Mars, a distant planet, and hence out of the DC Universe. Wonder Woman, now powerless, and Snapper Carr drifted away. The remaining heroes, although not radically altered, began to interact with a little more depth. Superman was perceived as the awesome hero his powers and heritage would logically make him. Batman became introverted and mystrious, more like the grim avenger his origin had suggested. Atom told jokes. Flash had a married life to worry about. All in all, the heroes grew from the simple defenders of justice they had been throughout the Silver Age into distinct Marvel-style personae.

DECLINE IN QUALITY

This new characterization brought a breath of fresh air, but overall the quality of the comics dropped. This was due, primarily, to drastic changes in the artistic staffs. In the Weisinger stable, Swan, already forced uncomfortably into DC's new large-panel format, now lost the pristine inking of George Klein and suffered under the heavy, overbearing lines of his replacement, Jack Able. More and more stories appeared by artists whose styles clashed with Swan's, including Andru and Winslow Mortimer. Schwartz was hit even harder. After Infantino he lost, in rapid order, Mike Sekowsky, Sid Greene, Murphy Anderson and Gil Kane—in short, all the giants of his stable. Their replacements, although adequate, did not possess the finesse of the old veterans (Neal Adams, with his atmospheric reworking of the Spectre, being the one exception). Andru, despite his dynamism, lacked the fluidity so necessary to the Flash; Dick Dillin, the new **Justice League** artist, could not solve layout problems as Sekowsky had, resulting in panels cluttered with heroes; Irv Novick and Bob Brown, the successors on **Batman** and **Detective Comics**, were unable to keep the Darknight Detective's nocturnal environment from becoming muddy and lustreless. By early 1970, not a single Schwartz comic displayed the stunning beauty of the Silver Age.

Along with the breakdown of the editorial monoliths came an irregularity of creative teams. Three or four writers, for instance,

SILVER AGE

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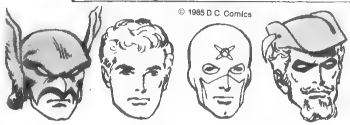
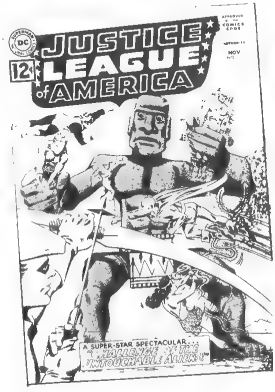


THE SILVER AGE WAS PERHAPS THE MOST CONSISTENTLY SATISFYING PERIOD OF ALL—THE PRISTINE FLASH, THE WONDERS OF KANDOR, THE BRAWLING FANTASTIC FOUR, THE ANGUISHED SPIDERMAN AND THE UTTERLY BIZARRE DR. DOOM.

NOW IT WAS OVER.



would alternate erratically on any given strip. At first, while the old editorial styles and classic type of DC storytelling endured, this worked well; the infusion of new ideas from young writers produced fresh, entertaining fare. It was an intimation, however, of trouble to come.

NEW VISIONS

There were also intimations that the visions of the writers and artists would soon eclipse those of the editors. Denny O'Neil would always bring his particular slant to storytelling. Neal Adams had only to apply his unique art style to transform any given strip; in 1969, he took his most significant step, remolding the Batman into a frightening night-stalker, and bringing about a totally new conception of his character. Wherever the two went, either individually or as a team, their vision would invariably supercede that of whatever editor they worked for. Other creative personalities of equal strength would soon emerge, parading their own visions, and the entire workings of the comics industry would be forever altered.

In attempting to revitalize the field, it became a virtual necessity to throw out all that had gone before. As the decade drew to a close, and new writers and artists sought to stretch the

MANY FEEL THAT THE JUSTICE LEAGUE BEST PERSONIFIES THE COLOR AND EXCITEMENT OF THE SILVER AGE.

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TWO OPPOSING TEAMS OF SUPER-HEROES VIE WITH EACH OTHER TO SAVE—
© 1985 D.C. Comics

boundaries of the medium, the Silver Age quietly perished. Gone were the ingeniously plotted short stories, the unified editorial visions, the colorful and decorative art, and most of all, the exuberant sense of fun.

The Silver Age had arguably been the most consistently satisfying period in the history of comics. It was a time when unwavering solid craftsmanship could exist side by side with the greatest extremes of experimentation. It was a time of the pristine Flash, the wonders of Kandor, the brawling Fantastic Four, the anguished Spider-Man and the utterly bizarre Doom Patrol. It was a time of few editorial viewpoints, but within them a wide spectrum of themes and inventions flourished in an environment of clear, farsighted vision. The readers however, had withdrawn their support, and a decade would follow in which editors, writers and artists, new and old alike, would scramble and grapple for a new direction.

Ironically, it was the man who had launched the Silver Age who pronounced its end. In 1970, when **Green Lantern** had seen a drastic drop in sales, Julius Schwartz handed it over to Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams and asked them to do something with it.

NEXT ISSUE BEGINS A NEW SERIES OF LOOKS AT THE SILVER AGE BY WILL MURRAY

LETTERS

Send all comments and correspondence to:
COMICS FEATURE
8399 Topanga Canyon Blvd.
Suite 210
Canoga Park, CA 91304

Dear Sirs,

Being one of Ralph Bakshi's biggest fans, I can't tell you how glad I was to see your article on this brilliant filmmaker. After various rumors after the 1983 release of *Fire and Ice* that Bakshi was going to drop out of the business, I am happy to see that he's working on another feature film.

I've seen practically every one of his films (excepting *Wizards* and *Hey Good Lookin'*) and have thoroughly enjoyed every one of them, but I have to say his absolute best is *Coonskin*. I saw this at an animation festival in Boston last year and I *loved* the film. . . and so did the audience. *Coonskin* was the only film there to get a standing ovation. It packs a wallop into your senses. . . the colors, the soundtrack, the feelings of excitement and pain all blending in with the images makes this one movie that deserves another chance. I'm surprised at the response it received in New York City back in 1975.

Having had some problems being admitted into some of his films, like *Fritz the Cat* because I'm only 15, I've got to say its been worth every bit of trouble seeing these movies. While Spielberg and Lucas may be pulling in the bucks, Ralph Bakshi will aways be at the top of my list as the world's greatest filmmaker. Is there anyway I could write to this guy, telling him how much I've loved his movies? If you guys could give me an address, I'd really appreciate it.

Thank you,

Grayel Johnson
RFD 3 Box 84
Ladds Lane
Epping, N.H. 03042

Grayel—Ralph can be reached care of our magazine. I'm sure he'll love to hear from an enthusiastic fan!—Happy Hal.

Ralph Bakshi's Wizards

Dear Mr. Schuster,

First, I would like to say that I am a new reader of *COMICS FEATURE* since the September issue spotlighting John Byrne. I haven't ordered a subscription yet, but I'm very strongly thinking along those lines. The purpose of this letter though is in regard to the excerpt from Mike Benton's book *Collecting Comics for Fun and Profit*.

I've read comics since I was a kid, but only in the last one to three years have I really picked up on it as a serious hobby. I've already learned a few pointers, from your magazine alone. In the January 86 issue, Benton almost admits jealousy of fans as stated in this article, who have found vintage Golden Age comics for only 50 cents apiece, 2,000 at that. Furthermore, a collector from my neighboring state of Kentucky finding a total of 93 1940s issues of *Submariner*, *Captain America* and *Human Torch* for only a buck a piece on the very coast of the stte in which I live, at a flea market. I read this article this very day. The same day I checked the Yellow Pages of various phone books and compiled a list of the most probable in my area. I've checked out a previous one before this list and didn't find any Golden Age whatsoever. The favor I'm asking is to know the exact city, name and location of this particular flea market, and even any others that there might be. After all, if this man was offering to see 93 vintage titles for a buck apiece, there ain't no telling what else there might be, maybe even some vintage *Superman*, *Batman* and *Justice Society*. You just never know. I've enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope. I very urgently await a reply.

Sincerely,
Tim Moss

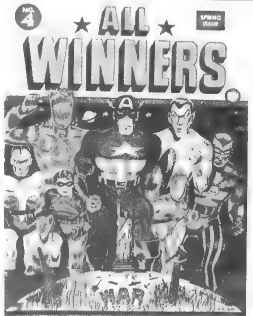
Tim—Mike is too busy finding books for himself and writing our columns to compose such a list. Keep checking the phone book!—Happy Hal.

Rudy Behlmer says that Coulton Waugh's Dickie Dare *is an underrated series. We agree. See* Strip Search *this issue for some much-deserved attention.*

Hi, I buy your magazine regularly in the magazine or bookstores I go to. Thanks for lowering the price on *COMICS FEATURE*. It's now even lower than *Comics Collector* which I subscribe to in the mail. Do you have back issues for sale? If so could you send me a list of what's available. I really enjoy reading your magazine and want to catch up on what I missed.

Devoted Comics Fan,
Dave W.

Dave—see the ad elsewhere in this issue for back issue prices. Glad you like us!—Happy Hal



Golden Age comics have been found at flea markets for as little as 50 cents apiece.

Dear Editor,

First off, let me say how great it is that you manged to lower the cover price and increase the frequency of *COMICS FEATURE*. Color isn't all that important to me as long as you put out a quality product, by the way.

I would like to say something about your reviews, Hal, which several letters have commented on. I enjoy your reviews very much, and find many of them to be fair and accurate. The confusion some people seem to have comes from the fact that your review of DC's entire line *did* appear to be a bit lukewarm and even cold compared to the Marvel review. Also, to be honest, Hal, there was the implication that DC followed Marvel's lead with *Crisis* after they saw how successful a project like that could be. It was right there in the actual review of *Crisis*, not in your closing statements. Then there's the fact you neglected to review *New Teen Titans* and *The Legion of Super-Heroes*. I believe all this helped to make people think you were being biased towards Marvel. Of course, *they* forgot that you did say that DC seemed to have the more interesting characters.

Okay. I had some reservations about having Stan Lee as a regular columnist, but I've changed my mind. He has very interesting things to say. But, unfortunately, it does associate you with Marvel a little more. Why? It's not anything he says, but merely the fact that he is "Mr. Marvel." Say "Stan Lee" and people tend to think of Marvel. This is helped out by the fact "Stan Lee Presents:" is emblazoned across the splash page of nearly every Marvel comic. But, it may become no problem at all, eventually, because of what he writes about and not who he is.

Speaking of Stan Lee's comments, I found his article in the February issue of CF to be interesting. He's also quite correct in his contention that Marvel was responsible for comicdom's "coming of age." I believe that things would be very different if Marvel had not come along. On the other hand, I hope everyone realizes that Marvel may not have happened—or would be altered—if DC never was. It has always been my feeling that DC was part of making Marvel so popular. Sound peculiar? Maybe. But, DC was first and so had the opportunity to make all the mistakes first. It was easy to see what DC was doing wrong and to make sure Marvel would not do the same thing. No one seems to realize that it all builds upon itself. One company or project gives birth to another and so on. This seems to be the main problem with the newer fans—they have no sense of history.

I was one of those who asked for some features on independent comics, and I've given it some more thought since then. I've come to the conclusion it might not necessarily be in CF's best interest if you dove head-on into these titles. Most people who have requested such features have most likely been reading comics for some time, live near a comic shop and/or buy other publications about comics. Therefore, it is my idea that you start by covering those independent comics that would most likely be of interest to the average Marvel and DC reader from the start. Such comics would be *The Elementals*, the new *Jonny Quest* comic, Roy Thomas's *Alter Ego* for First Comics, and *The DNAgents*. You get the point. Then you could eventually get around to covering titles like *American Flagg!* Give your readers a gradual exposure. A part of the feature could give information on ways those who do not live near a comics shop can get them. Addresses would be included for their convenience.

The Golden Age, Silver Age and *Heroes* are always informative and entertaining columns. Next to the main feature, these articles are my favorites. The histories on *Green Lantern, Batman, Incredible Hulk*, and the early days of Marvel were most welcome. I also liked CF40's coverage of DC's more unusual characters and titles and column on *Secret Agent X-9*.

Hmmmm. Perhaps what everyone means when they say "too much Marvel"—myself included—is that Marvel has been shown on the cover and been the main feature of too many issues. Heck, the last major DC peice I can remember was many, many months ago when you covered their 50th Anniversary. Somehow it hardly seems fair. I am glad that you are going to have an article or two on all that's happened at DC this past year, though!

Finally, I'd like to say that Mike Benton's column is good. I like it. So there!! I keep up with all the market information because it's *interesting*. Everyone who complained seems to think you can't read about all that unless you're only intested in making money. Not so! Besides, owners of comics shops need that sort of information and most fans do too, since they'll sell some comics at one point in the future. Recently, I sold a few so I could buy some new comics which I didn't have enough money for. Also, Mike takes every opportunity to remind those concerned only with investment and speculation that comics are for *fun* and should be *read*. This is an aspect of Fun & Profit that the critics forget.

Keep up the good work, folks!

Dan Schofield
652 Highland Ave.
Johnstown, Pa. 15902

Dan—I'm lukewarm towards most DCs and Marvels these days. I do apologize implying that Crisis *played copycat—but I did not have the facts behind the creation. The Legion and Titans were ignored for no good reason—a hasty oversight hopefully rectified this time around!*

The question of Stan the Man is resolved for now, unfortunately. I'm glad he chose us to run the few pieces he did have time for. On other matters, I'm studying the independents. And Mike says thanks.—Happy Hal

FUN & PROFIT

BY MIKE BENTON

If you're a serious comic collector, you already know what happens this time of year: The new comic book price guide arrives.

To be specific, we're talking about Robert M. Overstreet's **The Comic Book Price Guide** (16, in this case).

Next to comic books themselves, this book is what you need most of all to be a comic *collector*. Inside, you'll find over 17,000 comic titles listed (just about every comic book that has ever been published for the last fifty years), and close to 100,000 prices and values.

Yet after 16 years of publication, the price guide probably confuses more beginning and advanced collectors than any other book published.

Oh, the guide itself is simple enough to use—it's what people use it for that makes it confusing. Here's what I mean:

At a recent comic book convention where I was selling comics, a kid was digging through my bargain box of quarter comic books. He pulled out an issue of **Daredevil**, looked it up in a well-thumbed price guide and then turned to me, almost mad.

"Why are you selling this for a quarter?" he demanded. "The guide *says* it's worth $2.50!"

"Well then, how about giving me a dollar for the book?" I asked.

"No way. I wouldn't buy it If it was more than a quarter," he replied.

"Great," I answered. "Then that's exactly what it's worth to both you and me. Twenty-five cents, please."

The kid just learned an important lesson. Prices in a price guide are simply that: a *guide* to prices.

Most collectors (and dealers!) have a difficult time understanding what all those prices in a guide mean. They think that their own comics are automatically worth $5 or $10 or $100 because that price appears in a guide.

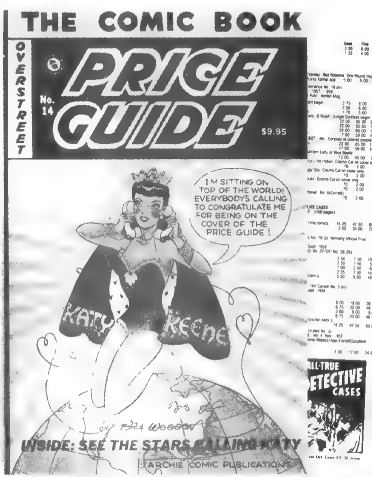
"Prices on paper have power," an antique dealer once told me. "Most people will readily believe a price is absolute, unchangable truth when they see it in print in a price guide. And that's the danger of price guides—using them as unshakable authority for all your collecting transactions."

Like all other price guides to collectibles, the **Comic Book Price Guide** is based in part on actual asking prices from dealer's lists, shows and auctions. Most prices in a guide represent what the dealer himself would *like* to get for a certain item—It's his asking price, his starting price, and not necessarily what he actually sells the item for.

All prices in a guide, then, are simply estimated or averaged values for a comic book. In the case of older and rarer books, the prices are even educated *guesses* about what such and such a book would be worth if it were offered for sale.

Many prices in the guide, however (especially for all comics published in the last twenty years), are indeed based on "real" retail prices asked by major national dealers.

Yet remember that asking prices for comics can vary widely from region to region. If a comic book store has only one copy of a book that twenty local collectors want, you can be sure that the price will be higher than the store which has twenty copies and only one collector.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KATY KEENE
INSIDE: SEE THE STARS CALLING KATY
ARCHIE COMIC PUBLICATIONS

PRICE GUIDES ARE TOOLS—YOU MUS

And also remember that the prices In a guide are "asking" prices.

At a recent comic convention, a dealer had a copy of **Fantastic Four** 1 with an $1800 price tag.

"I didn't know that FF 1 was worth that much," a young collector asked me.

"It's not worth anything," I told him, "until he **sells** it. Right now, he's asking $1800. What he gets for it is another matter."

And that's the major thing to remember when you look at all those prices in a price guide. Until you, or someone else, actually *pays* the price listed, then the comic is not worth that much.

In your collection right now, you probably have a comic that's worth $3 or $4 dollars—at least by the guide.

If you took that comic book to a dealer, you might get $1 for it. If you sold it to a fellow collector, you might get $2 for it. If you bought it from a mail order dealer, you might pay $3 for it. If you dumped it with the rest of your collection in bulk, you might get 25 cents for it.

A GUIDE TO PRICE GUIDES

SE THEM RIGHT!

So what's the book worth? What should its price be in the guide?

By agreement, the price listed in a price guide is the amount a serious collector *might* pay for an individual comic book that he *wants* for his collection.

In most cases, you can buy a comic for less than its price in a guide. And if you want to sell a comic book, then don't think you absolutely have to get the price listed for it in the guide!

Guide prices can vary from 20 to 300 percent in local markets. Use them as a guideline, but don't think of the prices as being written on a stone tablet.

As soon as you learn that you do not have to be a slave to prices in a guide, you'll have more fun (and bargains!) from collecting.

And dealers, too, need to realize that guide prices are *not* necessarily the selling price for comics.

I walked into a well-stocked comic book store in Los Angeles one day, and saw some minor humor comics from the late 1940s. The dealer had top guide prices on all the books, about $5 to $10 each.

"Aren't those nice books?" he asked. "I got about a hundred of those for forty cents each from an old gentleman last year. You know, I haven't sold one of them since."

I told him that I usually paid about two dollars each for such books.

"Hah! No way I'll sell them for that little! They're priced right at guide, like everything else here."

I pointed out that he could sell them all to me at a fair price and still more than quadruple his money.

"Do I look stupid? Forget it. I can read a price guide," he said with a smile and a smirk.

A lot of people can *read* a price guide, but I still suspect only a few people can *understand* one.

OPPORTUNITIES STILL KNOCK

What would you do with 10,000 comic books?

I quickly found out last month after I ran an ad in the local newspaper which simply said, "COMIC BOOKS WANTED. Quick Cash!"

I had received about four of the usual phone calls in response to this ad. You know the type: "I got a real old issue of Daffy Duck here. It's got a 25 cents price on it."

After getting off the phone to a kid who wanted to sell me his X-Men 150 for $8 (the little gouger!), a man about fifty years old called.

"Do you buy comic book collections? Now, I want to sell them all. I don't want people picking through them," he told me.

I BUY *ALL* COMICS, I told him confidently. He gave me directions to the warehouse district, so I should have suspected something.

When I arrived, he and his son had piled about 24 feet of comic books in front of a storage bin. I counted my money, and asked with a smile:

"How much?"

"$550."

"Fine."

Somehow I got the books home, and spent the next week sorting out 10,000 comics. I got a few nice issues, nothing fabulous, yet it was well worth my time and money.

A few weeks later at a convention where I took the books to be sold, I met a college student who had a table full of beautiful Golden Age comics. He had at least 200 shiny new comics from the 1940s. I was jealous.

"How did you get these comics" I asked. I suspected he was some rich little snot who spent big bucks on them.

"Last summer when I visited my grandparents in Nebraska," he began, "I ran an ad in the local paper asking for old comics. It was only a town of 650 people, but a farmer outside of town called me."

"He brought me a box of comics that he had only read once and saved since his childhood. And here they are."

Now the point to these little stories is that there are still a *lot* of old comics and large comic collections to be found.

And you yourself have a good chance of finding those comics if you work just a little bit.

A FEW GOLDEN GOODIES!

Try placing ads in your local paper. Keep the ad simple. Don't say that you buy only old comics or collector's comics. Most people don't know an **X-Men** from a **Little Lulu.**

Instead, emphasize that you buy *all* comics. People who want to sell usually want to get rid of all the comic books they have accumulated.

When you get a phone call about your ad, try to get a general idea of how many (and how old) the comics are. You don't want to waste an afternoon driving across town to look at 25 ragged Archie comics from a ten-year old's toy box.

Make sure that you have enough cash in your pocket to do the deal. Most people don't want a check, and they will be more eager to sell if they know you have quick cash.

Keep in mind that unless they are collectors themselves, people have very little money tied up in their accumulations of comics. Most of the time the books were bought for ten or fifteen cents apiece several years ago.

That doesn't mean you can "steal" these books, but you are not expected to pay anywhere near collector or guide prices. Generally, you can pay anywhere from 10 to 30 percent of guide, and still do okay on such purchases.

How you do it and how much you pay is up to you and your conscience.

Just remember that true comic collectors don't wait for the deals to fall into their laps. They go forth and find those old collections.

So start today. The find of a lifetime may only be a phone call away!

SOME FINE BOOKS

Back in 1967, I was determined to collect every comic book that had artwork by Carl Barks (*the* Donald Duck artist and creator of Uncle Scrooge, for those that may not know).

By 1972, I had about 80 percent of all the hundreds and hundreds of books he had done since 1942. And then I gave up.

The remaining comics I needed would have cost me several hundred dollars, even at the low prices at that time. Of course at today's prices I wouldn't even attempt such a collection.

Yet collectors today still have opportunities every day to collect all the comics done by a particular artist favorite.

If you have a favorite new artist that's only started working in comics during the last few years, start your collection *now*. With some artists, it's still possible to get all the issue with their work at a reasonable price.

Even fan favorites such as Frank Miller and John Byrne can still be completed by collectors on a limited budget—if they start now.

And the real fun starts when you pick a brand-new artist to specialize in. You can start your collecting career with the artist's professional career. Buy each new issue that he appears in, keep an index of all his comic work and get any back issues you need as soon as you can.

If the artist really catches on with the fans, you may have a collection that will be worth a nice chunk of money in a few years.

I remember back in early 1979 when Frank Miller's first **Daredevil** appeared (158). By issue 161, I was scrambling for the first three issues with his work. I only wish that now I had bought copies of all his earlier work at cover price when I had the chance.

There are new and promising artists who appear for the first time almost every month. Pick a favorite, keep your collection up to date and see if you've got a winner a few months from now.

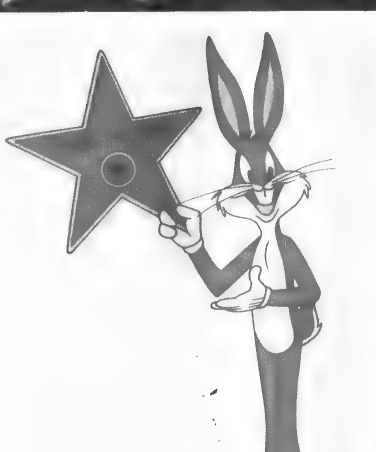
Besides that, it's nice to show your support for a good beginning artist. Now if I had only been around in 1942 when a young cartoonist named Carl Barks drew *his* first comic!

CF

MIKE BENTON is the author of *Comic Book Collecting for Fun and Profit* (Crown Publishers, $8.95), now available at your local bookstore or comic book specialty shop

Animated Antics

BY JAMES VAN HISE



He's that rascally rabbit, that thorn in the side of Elmer Fudd, who's been taking pokes at pompous convention for almost fifty years. The very symbol of cartoon magic, Bugs remains one of the favorite cartoon characters of all time even though new antics are few and far between.

When Bugs was born in 1938, he was hardly recognizeable as the rabbit who would become a star in the Forties and Fifties. "Porky's Hare Hunt" features Porky in the hunter's role, soon to be taken over by Elmer Fudd. Ostensibly Porky's cartoon, the unidentified rabbit is always getting the upper hand. The rabbit only vaguely resembles our Bugs and the voice is the pixilated laugh which would later be adapted for Walter Lantz productions' Woody Woodpecker. (Voice artist Mel Blanc created the vocals for both characters.) The cartoon, directed by Ben "Bugs" Hardaway, baptized the character in an unexpected way. When a model sheet of the rabbit was labeled Bugs' Bunny, meaning that it was Hardaway's rabbit, the name stuck.

While the first cartoon was in black and white, his second appearance a year later ("Hare-um Scare-um") was in color. This time the character had even more pronounced buck teeth than before, but was more like Daffy Duck than the Bugs we know. The rabbit even had a goofy song: "I'm so goony, looney tuney, touched in the head. Please pass the ketchup, I think I'll go to bed." Not exactly the stuff of which Bugs Bunny is made!

"Elmer's Candid Camera" (1940) once more featured the goofy rabbit, but ushered Elmer Fudd on to the scene for what would become a long, antagonistic relationship. Elmer is searching for woodland creatures to photograph when he happens upon "wabbit twacks."

The first true Bugs Bunny cartoon, with the character revised and refined into familiar form, came in Tex Avery's "A Wild Hare" (1940). Elmer was back and his voice was once again assayed by its originator, Arthur O. Bryan. (Mel Blanc did not do Elmer's voice until after Bryan's death some years later.) Gags were repeated from the earlier cartoons, but this time it *really* was Bugs. His voice was not yet refined, though, sounding more like a punk than a trickster. Avery introduced the classic "What's Up Doc?" line. Darwin's theory of evolution had been applied to cartoons and Bugs emerged at the high end of the scale.

WHO CREATED BUGS BUNNY?

Many have claimed credit over the years for the character's origin, particularly the late Bob Clampett. But from the evidence, it was a team effort, beginning with Bugs Hardaway, added to by Chuck Jones and whipped into shape by Tex Avery. Avery did the most to form the character of Bugs and the rabbit has remained essentially unchanged since. Only the interpretation of comedic themes varies from director to director. Bugs Bunny is a bit more crazed under the direction of Bob Clampett, but it is still Bugs Bunny. During the last 15 years of his life, Clampett made many creative claims which were disputed by his old Warner Brothers coworkers. When the fanzine **Funnyworld** ran the first part of an extensive interview with Clampett in 1970, Chuck Jones and others made blistering attacks on its assertions. The concluding installment was never published because

of the many questions raised about Clampett's accuracy.

Chuck Jones' first official Bugs Bunny was "Elmer's Pet Rabbit" (1941) but Tex Avery once more played with the boundaries of the form in "The Heckling Hare." This was the fourth Bugs Bunny cartoon to appear in 1941 and Avery's third fling with the character. "The Heckling Hare" features the familiar theme of Bugs outwitting a hunter, or in this case, the hunter's dog. But after he tricks the dog into walking off a cliff, Bugs falls down a hole he'd dug. He plummets right after the canine from a height seemingly thousands of feet above the valley far below. Bugs and the dog fall together, screaming in terror of their imminent demise for what seems like at least half a minute. Their faces contort with the realization of an inescapable doom. Then they make themselves stop just short of the ground, turn to the camera and remark, "Fooled ya', didn't we?" A variation of that gag, involving a crashing airplane, would be used by Bob Clampett in "Falling Hare" (1943).

AN EVENTFUL LIFE Along with Daffy Duck, Bugs Bunny became one of the biggest stars of the Warners cartoon stable. A number of writers were to chronicle his fantastic exploits. These included Warren Foster and Tedd Pierce. But the writer behind some of Bugs Bunny's greatest exercises in comedy was Michael Maltese, who wrote such classics as "Rabbit of Seville" (1950) and "What's Opera, Doc?" (1957). While Maltese later teamed with Chuck Jones in a perfect creative match that would last a dozen years, he was first closely linked with Tex Avery during the early formative period of Bugs.

Of Avery's contribution to the Bugs Bunny mythos, Maltese said in the Jan. 1975 **Film Comment**: "The guy with the most mischievous Bugs Bunny character in the whole studio was Tex Avery. He kept that studio jumping. When Avery was around, you got a kind of gaggy, fun atmosphere. Usually, anybody working for a director would say, 'He's the boss,' and there would be problems. But Avery would cheer the guys into this crazy mixed-up attitude. And you can put this down—I don't care what you hear from anybody else—he took Bugs Bunny and instilled into him the character that *made* Bugs Bunny."

Tex Avery did a total of four Bugs Bunny cartoons: "A Wild Hare," "Tortoise Beats Hare" (both 1940), "Heckling Hare" and "All This And Rabbit Stew" (both 1941). (Avery left Warners in 1942 for MGM.)

The other director assigned to Bugs during this time, besides Chuck Jones and Bob Clampett, was Friz (not Fritz) Freleng. It was Freleng who served as the inspiration for Michael Maltese when he concocted one of Bugs' best-loved antagonists.

Of that time, Maltese recalled: "They never went in for the cute stuff at Warners. There was only one guy that tried cute stuff. Chuck, at the time—and he'll admit it—had the Disney syndrome—the urge to make the most beautiful cartoons going. Freleng would say, 'Ah, bullshit! Let's knock 'em dead!' In 1944, when I was working for Freleng, we came up with Yosemite Sam. In a picture called 'Hare Trigger', and I patterned him more or less after Freleng—'*Why, I'll blow you to smithereens! Oooooooh!*' A real red-haired, hot-tempered little guy! Oh, he was a little firebrand."

Disney was a force to be reckoned with in the world of animation of the Forties, but there was stiff competition from other studios. While **Fantasia** (1940) was not a commercial success at the time, it was recognized as a milestone in the world of animation. Anything that big was open to parody. Touching on that as well as Disney's *Silly Symphony* series (which were also animation set to classical music) was Bob Clampett's "A Corny Concerto" (1943). Written by Frank Tashlin, the cartoon contains two segments (each introduced by conductor Elmer Fudd), the first story featuring Porky Pig and his trusty hound hunting Bugs. In the climax, when Bugs seems to have been mortally wounded and the weeping Porky pulls the stricken hare's hands away from across his chest, we're startled to see Bugs wearing a blue bra! Bugs screams, tears off the bra, pulls it over the heads of Porky and his hound dog, and then dances off into the woods like a ballet star, complete in tu-tu.

Clampett's "Wabbit Trouble" (1941) has his name spelled out *Wobert Cwampett* in purest Elmer Fuddese in the credits. Featuring a still very obese Elmer, "Wabbit Trouble" offersla wild bit in which Elmer is menaced by a bear. Playing dead so that the bear will leave him alone, Bugs moves in as soon as the bear moves off. Standing on the petrified Elmer (whose eyes are squeezed tightly shut), roaring in his face, Bugs does everything he can to insure that

WHAT'S UP DOC?

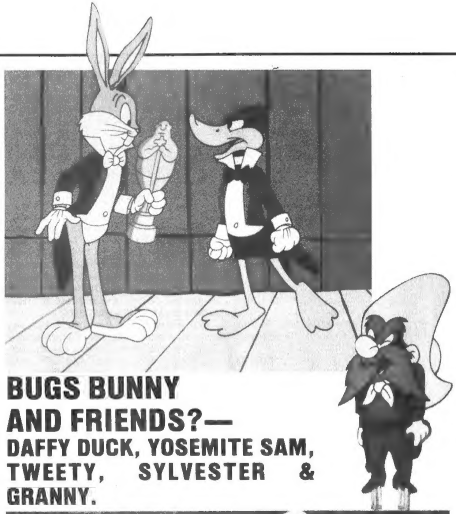
Elmer believes his demise at the claws of a bear is imminent. In "Hare Remover" (1946), former Clampett scripter Frank Tashlin turns director to repeat the same bear gag with Bugs once again the perpetrator. It shows that Bugs will use a great gag over again when the opportunity presents itself.

A BIT FURTHER Clampett's manic approach to the bunny goes just a bit further than the other directors did. Bugs giving his antagonists a big sloppy kiss on the mouth is a common element in many of the cartoons. But, in Clampett's, there seems to be more to it than a ridiculous charade. In Clampett's cartoons the rabbit likes to undress the objects of his derision.

In "The Wacky Wabbit" (1942), from his hiding place inside the skull of a steer, Bugs observes a still obese Elmer as he trudges across the desert. During one assault, Bugs severs Elmer's suspenders, revealing a corset underneath.

In "Buckaroo Bugs" (1944), the entire cartoon seems constructed around a recurring bit where Bugs assaults the Red Roy Rider with a magnet which pulls off buttons, weapons and whathaveyou from the victim's body until first only underwear remains, then only a fig leaf. In the conclusion, Bugs completes the humiliation by reaching through the closing circle signifying the story's end to pluck the fig leaf. Only rarely were the undertones in the Clampett cartoons duplicated by other directors.

Because the cartoons were made for theatrical distribution with Warner Brothers pictures, they were generally aimed more at adults. The creators used gags that they found funny and felt adults would appreciate. As the years rolled by, Bugs would dress up in drag more frequently, so much so that youngsters seeing the cartoons would sometimes deliberate over just what gender he really was. In



BUGS BUNNY AND FRIENDS?— DAFFY DUCK, YOSEMITE SAM, TWEETY, SYLVESTER & GRANNY.

"Mississippi Hare" (1948), director Chuck Jones puts Bugs in drag as a southern belle romancing a proper southern gentleman until, in the midst of a gracious bow, the beau looks up the lady's dress, finding that her charms consist of a pair of hairy grey legs and a tail. The man blanches, gags and staggers off the steamboat to plunge into the Mississippi.

There are many sides to the rascally rabbit. In most cases, his feuds begin only after he has been put upon. While his now famous, "Of course you realize, this means war," originated in one of his earliest appearances, Chuck Jones refined it to show that Bugs only attacks in retaliation. In fact, it sometimes can take a lot to set him off.

In "Long-Haired Hare" (1949), Bugs is sitting in the countryside, playing a guitar and singing. This disturbs an operatic tenor who is practicing. The tenor keeps destroying the hare's musical instruments and only after the third, violent assault does Bugs emit his personal call to arms. It's one of Chuck Jones best cartoons and even features another nod to **Fantasia** when Bugs appears, not in drag, but as the world famous conductor Leopold Stokowski.

The different ways in which directors saw Bugs is apparent not only in the way Bugs acts but also in the way he is drawn. In "A Lad In His Lamp" (1948) directed by Bob McKimson, Bugs is on the chubby side—very noticeably so. McKimson often did the Foghorn Leghorn cartoons and the mannerisms of that loud-mouthed, cocky rooster show up in Bugs, even to the bunny adopting a rather obnoxious gait.

But McKimson could also use Bugs to good effect in cartoons such as "Hillbilly Hare" (1950) when the rabbit plays a Virginia reel on the fiddle which has two mountain folk pounding each other senseless to the hare's clever rhyming. It's a Bugs Bunny classic!

1950 also saw Bugs and Chuck Jones at the top of their form in "Rabbit of Seville" in which "The Marriage of Figaro" by Rossini forms the backdrop of another parody. When Elmer chases Bugs on stage during an orchestra recital (seemingly at the Hollywood Bowl), the mania begins. When Bugs gives Elmer a straight-razor shave to the orchestral beat, he melodically observes: "There, you're nice and clean, although your face looks like it might have gone through a machine." This cartoon has everything, from Bugs in drag to the classic one-upsman chases where each menaces the other in turn with a

larger and larger weapon—axe to bigger axe, pistol to shotgun and finally small cannon to large cannon. The latter sequence is always trimmed down on the Saturday morning network reruns. In the climax, in pantomime, Elmer in drag in a white wedding dress marries Bugs who is decked out in a tuxedo. And the beat goes on.

"Bunny Hugged" (1951) is a Jones-directed, Maltese-scripted, parody of professional wrestling. Bugs is the mascot of Ravishing Ronald until The Crusher makes short work of him. To protect his livelihood, Bugs becomes The Masked Terror.

NEW PLAYERS Daffy Duck started co-starring with Bugs in the Fifties. Daffy had always gotten one up on Porky in their earlier teamups. But the new arrangement had the duck playing not only second fiddle, but being the prize chump for the rabbit! This was evident in "Rabbit Fire" (1951), "Rabbit Seasoning" (1952) and "Duck! Rabbit! Duck!" (1953). Still, Daffy proves to be hilarious even when bested and humiliated such as in the 1953 entry when he cracks and exclaims: "Shoot me again, I enjoy it! I love the smell of burnt feathers and gunpowder and cordite! I'm an elk, shoot me, go on, it's elk season! I'm a fiddler crab, why don't you shoot me? It's fiddler crab season!" That Daffy accompanies this outburst with a manic pantomime of everything he's describing makes it work like a charm. He isn't called Daffy for nothing!

"Robot Rabbit" (1953) continues the tradition of throwaway lines such as Bugs intro in the picture when he's singing, "Oh carrots are devine you get a dozen for a dime—it's magic!"

1955 saw a variety of tales beginning with "Beanstalk Bunny." Teamed with Daffy again, the duck forces Bugs into the story by attacking him. In the climax, Daffy is once again the victim of the plot. The Freleng-directed "Hare Brush" is one of the very strangest Bugs stories ever as Elmer Fudd cracks up and thinks he's a rabbit and Bugs is brainwashed into believing he's Elmer. The rabbit then proceeds to stalked the hunter and has many of the same bits pulled on him that he pulled on Elmer over the years. The kicker is when Bugs is arrested for tax evasion (the IRS believes he's Fudd) and Elmer remarks, "I may be a screwy rabbit, but I'm not going to Alcatraz!" and hops away. Really strange. "Rabbit Rampage" is a less-inspired version of "Duck Amuck" (1953). Neither has a plot and both deal with an unseen animator taking advantage of the character. In the earlier entry, Bugs was the wiley animator. In the latter, Elmer is revealed as the one finally getting his revenge.

"To Hare Is Human" (1956) is an odd one as Bugs is menaced by a talking Wile E. Coyote who seems related to the Road Runner version without really being the same coyote at all. In "Hare-Breadth Hurry" (1963), Bugs once again faces off with the coyote because "the Roadrunner sprained a giblet" and so Bugs is standing in for him, imitating the Roadrunner up to and including his super-speed. It starts out looking like a Roadrunner cartoon and it's thus quite a surprise when the blur racing down the desert highway turns out to be Bugs!

Daffy is back again in "Ali Baba Bunny" (1957) and exclaims to Bugs, "I can't help it! I'm a greedy slob! It's my hobby!"

1957 also sees the supreme **Fantasia** send-up in "What's Opera, Doc?". Done to the strains of Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries," it features Elmer in a magic helmet hunting bugs through a baroque Disney-esque landscape of thunder, lightning and menacing shadows. Perfect.

The Tasmanian Devil (beloved by fans, including Stephen King, who featured the character as the focal point of his short story "The Crate") is introduced in "Bedevilled Rabbit" (1957) by director Robert McKimson.

"People Are Bunny" (1959) is a McKimson-directed cartoon guest-starring Daffy in a satire of tv audience participation game shows.

1958 sees Bugs become an Oscar-winning rabbit when his cartoon "Knighty-Knight Bugs" wins for best short film.

When **The Bugs Bunny Show** appeared on Oct. 11, 1960 on prime time tv, Bugs became known to America as "that Oscar-winning rabbit!" The show featured new animation to introduce cartoons from the late Forties and Fifties and ran through Sept. 25, 1962. A Saturday morning version began in April 1962 and has remained on the air continuously, making it the longest running Saturday morning show in the history of television! Unfortunately, the Seventies saw some of the cartoons censored due to "violence," particularly "The Rabbit of Seville."

New cartoons continued being produced in the early Sixties, such as "Mad As A Mars Hare" (1963). In this one Bugs

THE REAL BOSS?

runs into Marvin Martian again (also seen in "Hare-Way To The Stars"), who turns a raygun on the rabbit to project him into future slime. Instead Bugs becomes a monstrous Neanderthal rabbit, and likes it. "When I get back to Earth," he promises in the climax, "Elmer and the rest of those hunters are in for a big surprise!"

But instead, the next Bugs cartoon, released a month later, is "Transylvania 6-5000." Here Bugs encounters a weird vampire, Count Bloodcount, who can move around like an impressionistic shadow as well as a bat. We see portraits with such labels as Ghouls Scout Camp and a book called *Rise And Fall of the Roman Vampire*. There's a lot of neat little bits in it.

After **The Bugs Bunny Show** left prime time tv, Bugs was only seen in reruns until Chuck Jones started doing tv specials. **A Connecticut Rabbit In King Arthur's Court** in 1977 is fun as are the bits in **The Bugs Bunny/Road Runner Movie** (1980) in which Bugs shows us portraits of his fathers—Chuck Jones, Friz Freleng, Bob McKimson and the others—all except for Bob Clampett. But then Clampett had stolen the show in an earlier compilation film, **Bugs Bunny Superstar**, in which Clampett was the only director interviewed in the film to recount the creation of the Oscar winning rabbit.

Bugs Bunny continues in film compilations of his adventures, with some new connecting animation, as well as in a tv special now and then. He's as lively as ever in reruns, seen on as many as three or four channels a day if you have cable tv, or at least two even if you don't! Videotapes are a new stage for him to appear on—albeit in reruns. His popularity remains undiminished; the men who created him just as legendary as that little grey wabbit himself. In a sense all were honored when, on Dec. 21, 1985, Bugs received yet another tribute—his own star on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame!

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